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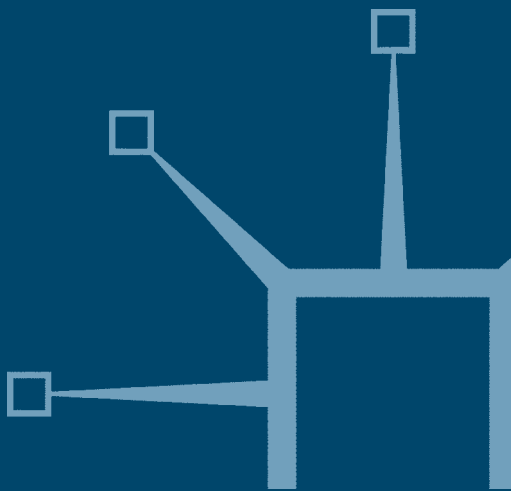
An Identity Theory of Truth

Julian Dodd



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To Susan and Eleanor

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Preface

Parts of this book are based upon some of my previously published articles. In each case, they have been rewritten, sometimes extensively. Chapter 1 and Chapter 4, §§3.4–3.6 contain work first published as my 1999a, which appeared in the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77. This material is reproduced by kind permission of Oxford University Press. Chapter 2, §2 and Chapter 3, §5 were originally published as my 1997a in the *Journal of Philosophical Research* 22, and those sections relied upon here are reproduced by kind permission of the Philosophy Documentation Center. Chapter 5, §4 is based upon work first published as my 1996b in *Bradley Studies* 2, and that article is reprinted here by kind permission of the editors. Chapter 6, §6 is a later version of my 1997b, which first appeared in *Analysis* 57, while my 1999c, published in *Analysis* 60, is an earlier draft of §8 of the same chapter. Finally, Chapter 7, §4 is a revised and expanded version of my 1999b, which was first published in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 99.

I would like to thank all of the editors and referees for their valuable comments and criticisms.

Much of this book's first draft was written during a semester's sabbatical in the academic year 1997–98. I am grateful to my friends and colleagues in the Philosophy Group at Bolton Institute for their kindness and support. Special thanks must go to Nick Unwin: rottweiler-in-chief of the Philosophy Research Seminar.

Now that I have finished the book, I feel that I must record my gratitude to two people, both of whom were teachers of mine who have become friends. The first is Michael Morris. My arrival as an undergraduate at the University of Sussex in October 1985 coincided with Michael's arrival as a lecturer. I could not have been luckier. Michael's warmth, enthusiasm and generosity made my time at Sussex intensely challenging and exciting. His teaching, not only in timetabled classes but in his famous 'extra seminars', swept me towards the decision to try to become an academic philosopher. Although he will disagree with much of what I have to say, I hope that some of his style has rubbed off on me.

Jennifer Hornsby's influence upon this book has been twofold. First of all, Jennifer is largely responsible for encouraging me to think along the lines that have led me to where I am now. The book is a descendant of

the Oxford DPhil thesis which she supervised so patiently and thoroughly, and conversations then and since have made this a much better book than it would have been without her. Second, as I brought the book to completion, it increasingly dawned on me that Jennifer's *Actions* (1980) is the Gold Standard when it comes to the concise philosophical monograph. I have tried, however unsuccessfully, to emulate her book's crispness and elegance.

J.D.

Preface to the 2008 Paperback Edition

Inevitably, this book is a snapshot in the development of my thinking about the concept of truth, rather than its summation. On re-reading it, I have discovered that there is plenty that I still agree with, quite a lot that I wish I had put differently, and one part that I now think is plain wrong.

The offending part I have in mind is Chapter 7, §4, in which I criticise the kind of identity conception of truth favoured by John McDowell and Jennifer Hornsby. Presuming that McDowell and Hornsby treat facts as configurations of objects and properties, I go on to argue that their Fregeanism about propositions renders their identity conception incoherent: *per impossibile*, McDowell and Hornsby (it seemed to me in 2000) treat facts as *both* combinations of entities from the realm of reference *and* as configurations of Fregean senses (p. 179). However, the said presumption that McDowell and Hornsby adopt a Tractarian account of facts is, I now recognise, a mistake. While they do, indeed, hold that facts are (true) Fregean Thoughts, their appeal to the Tractarian slogan, 'The world is the totality of facts, not of things', far from committing them to Wittgenstein's own account of facts' ontological nature, merely 'fix[es] a way in which the concept of the world is to be used' (McDowell 1999, p. 94). Whilst agreeing with Wittgenstein that the world is made up of items with propositional structure, McDowell and Hornsby do not sign up to Wittgenstein's own doctrine concerning such items' constituents. The world of facts is, for them, a world of true Fregean Thoughts, pure and simple.

Looking back, I feel that this kind of response to my original charge of incoherence – a response laid out by Hornsby in her 1999 and echoed by McDowell in his 1999 and 2005 – deserved a more serious and charitable treatment than that provided by my (all too brief) discussion on pp. 178–83. The process of providing such a treatment is begun in my 2008.

In the time since this book was first published, discussion of the identity theory of truth – and, in particular, the spin that McDowell puts upon it – has continued apace. I particularly recommend Candlish 2006, Gaskin 2006 and Sullivan 2005, but other more recent articles are

cited in this book's up-dated bibliography. Additionally, later work of mine on truthmaker theory, usefully elaborating the kinds of objections raised in Chapter 1, is found in my 2002 and 2007.

Finally, I'd like to thank Susan and Eleanor for continuing to provide the love, support and gentle mockery that has kept me going in philosophy over the last few years.

J.D.
June, 2007

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1

Truthmakers, Facts and States of Affairs: a Critique of Correspondence

1. Introduction

At first blush, it is difficult to discern what it could be for a theory of truth to count as a *correspondence theory*. Conceptions of truth as different from one another as those offered by the early Wittgenstein (1922); J.L. Austin (1950, 1961), and Alfred Tarski (1944, 1956) have all been labelled 'correspondence theories'; and this might encourage one to think that there is no core substantial doctrine answering to the name.[1] In response to this feeling, the greater part of this book (Chapters 1 to 4) has two main objectives: first of all, to uncover the substantial doctrine held by correspondence theorists; but second, and more significantly, to expose this credo as a myth. Precisely *why* it is mythological is a question whose consideration propels us towards a more satisfying way of thinking about truth.

In the present chapter we shall see that the correspondence theorist's guiding principle is that propositions, if true, are *made true* by facts. I shall argue that this is a piece of philosophical folklore which, as we shall duly see, misrepresents the nature of facts. By the end of Chapter 4 we shall come to appreciate that facts are not truthmakers, merely (neo-Fregean) thoughts that are true. Properly speaking, a true thought does not correspond to a fact; where the correspondence theorist looks for correspondence there can only be *identity*. The putative truth*maker* is nothing but the truth*bearer*.

This response to correspondence theories amounts to what I call a *modest identity theory* of truth. Such an attitude does not share the usual analytical ambitions of things called 'theories of truth'. It aims neither to define 'is true' nor to explain what the difference between truth and falsehood consists in. But, I shall argue in Chapter 5, it is none the

worse for that. The claim that a true thought *is* (identical with) a fact *sheds light* on the concept of truth by virtue of illustrating the error made by correspondence theorists. And in thus removing correspondence theories from the scene, the modest identity theory prepares the ground for a proper deflation of the concept of truth, a deflation I defend in Chapter 6.

It is fair to say that identity theories of truth have only been sporadically adopted by philosophers. None the less, identity theories have been held, however fleetingly, by Bertrand Russell (1903, 1904b); G.E. Moore (1899, 1902); F.H. Bradley (1893, 1907) and, more recently, Jennifer Hornsby (1997, 1999). The book's final chapter distinguishes the modest identity theory from its rival identity theories. The modest theory, so I shall claim, neatly avoids the various objections which disable its competitors.

My aim in writing this book is to make a case for, and to examine the consequences of, a certain attitude towards truth. But we must begin by examining what is meant by the claim that truth is a matter of correspondence. Once we have set out clearly what it is that makes a theory of truth a correspondence theory, decisive objections will duly arise. As I have suggested, an appreciation of these objections will take us some way down the path towards the way of thinking about truth that I shall be recommending.

2. Facts as truthmaking states of affairs

2.1 'A proposition is true just in case it corresponds to a fact.'[2] If this slogan is meant in the way a correspondence theorist means it, it commits its user, firstly, to the claim that a certain theoretical role must be played by entities of some kind, and, secondly, to the thesis that the entities in question are facts. Let us examine the theoretical role first.

J.L. Austin famously claims that '[i]t takes two to make a truth. . . . When a statement is true, there is, *of course*, a state of affairs which makes it true' (1950, p. 23). Bertrand Russell takes a similar view, at least during his logical atomist period. 'When I speak of a fact', Russell says, 'I mean the kind of thing that makes a proposition true or false' (1918, p. 182). Finally, Michael Dummett has noted that 'Frege does not himself employ the notion of what *makes* the thought expressed by a sentence true, perhaps because he wants to avoid the conception of a fact or state of affairs as belonging to the realm of reference' (1981, p. 444). These remarks point nicely to what I take to be the distinctive intuition motivating correspondence theories of truth: every truth must have a *truthmaker*.

According to a correspondence theorist, there must be entities occupying the truthmaking role. But as yet, this declaration is little more than a form of words. What does it really mean?

One thing is clear enough. A truthmaker for <*a* is *F*> is supposed to be an entity in the real world, a thing distinct from the proposition itself, with which the proposition, as a whole, is correlated.[3] The believer in truthmakers holds that complete truths, and not just their sub-propositional constituents, have worldly relata. But this does not get to the bottom of the idea that something in the world must *make* the truth in question true. The correspondence theorist's intuition is not simply that <*a* is *F*> must be correlated with an entity in the world, but that there must be 'something in the world which *ensures* that *a* is *F*' (Armstrong 1991, p. 190; my italics): something which acts as the truth's 'ontological ground' (Armstrong 1991, p. 190). The idea here is that a true proposition's truthmaker must be such that its *mere existence guarantees* that the proposition is true. As D.M. Armstrong puts it, 'the truthmaker for a truth must necessitate that truth. . . . [I]f a certain truthmaker makes a certain truth true, then there is no alternative world where that truthmaker exists but the truth is a false proposition' (1997, p. 115).

The sense in which the existence of a truthmaker necessitates a proposition's truth cannot be causal (ibid., p. 115). The idea can only be that the existence of the truthmaker is necessarily sufficient for the proposition to be true. Tidied up a little, what this means is that a true proposition's truthmaker is an entity whose existence *entails* that the proposition is true.[4] And with this account of truthmaking in place, we can regard as a correspondence theory any theory of truth which upholds the following principle:

(TM) For <*p*> to be true, there must exist at least one entity, distinct from <*p*>, whose existence entails that <*p*> is true.[5]

To some, this might appear overly stipulative. In my defence, some of the heartiest defenders of 'correspondence'-talk (Russell, Austin and Armstrong) appeal to the idea that truths are made true by something; and (TM) would seem to be the most plausible way of spelling out this idea in such a way as to reconstruct a substantial theory that goes beyond the mere platitude that <*p*> is true just in case things are as they are stated to be.

Having introduced (TM), three points of clarification must be made at once. The first is that (TM) commits one neither to the thesis that each truth has just one truthmaker, nor to the thesis that each truth has a minimal truthmaker (where a minimal truthmaker for a truth is an entity which is a part of each of the truth's truthmakers). The believer in (TM)

may well regard truths such as <At least one person has written a book about truth> as counterexamples to both theses. Of itself, (TM) entails neither of the theses in question.

My second remark concerns the nature of the supposed correspondence between truthbearer and truthmaker. I have said nothing specific about this matter beyond (TM), and for good reason. Although it is tempting to think that the correspondence relation can only be pictorial, other options are available. One may deny that a truth and its truthmaker are structurally isomorphic, preferring instead to hold either that true propositions refer to their truthmakers or that the non-pictorial relation between a truth and its truthmaker is a *sui generis* semantic relation.[6] Again, we should not mistake the essential doctrine for inessential features shared by some, but not all, correspondence theories. We shall see that it is the essential doctrine, the commitment to (TM), which is the source of the correspondence theorist's travails.

My third point concerns the relation between (TM) and what most commentators assume to be the task of a correspondence theory: that of providing a *definition* of 'is true'.[7] In short, someone accepting (TM) need not be viewed as aiming to do this. The project of defining 'is true' is supposed to supply a phrase synonymous with the truth predicate which makes use of concepts suitably distinct from, and which do not presuppose, the concept of truth. Needless to say, it is far from obvious that (TM) helps us to do this: it looks like the notions of *entailment* and *fact* cannot be explicated other than in terms of the concept of truth. However, even if (TM) does not promise to lead us towards a definition of truth, it is, I should stress, by no means trivial. To appreciate this, note that (TM) goes way beyond the simple claim that truthbearers have ontological commitments in a mind-independent world.[8] It is a platitude that for it to be true that snow is white, things must be as they are judged to be: snow must be white. And we may cash this out by saying that for the proposition to be true, the stuff referred to by the word 'snow' must satisfy the predicate 'is white'. But such an explanation gets us nowhere near a correspondence theory: snow is not a *truthmaker* for <Snow is white>, since snow could exist and yet not be white. A correspondence theorist takes the truth in question to commit us ontologically not only to snow but to some entity playing the truthmaking role as well.[9]

What, then, is (TM) doing, if not forming the basis of an attempt to define truth? The answer is that it aims to provide us with an explanation of what truth *consists in*. That is to say, (TM) is supposed to deliver a property *F*, possessed by all and only the true propositions, which is such that those propositions are true *because* they are *F*. The property

in question is, of course, *being made true by something*, where truthmaking is explicated along the lines set out above. It is this property which is supposed to explain the difference between truth and falsehood.[10] Falsehoods, so the story goes, do not have truthmakers.

Having distinguished a commitment to (TM) from the project of trying to define 'is true', a familiar objection to correspondence theories can be dismissed at once. This objection, originating with Ramsey (1927), has it that the correspondence theorist's remarks risk being platitudinous because there is a circularity engendered by the attempt to analyze the concept of truth in terms of those of *correspondence* and *fact* (supposing facts to be the most convincing pretenders to the truthmaking crown). As Blackburn colourfully suggests (1984, p. 225), 'corresponds-to-the-facts' looks as if it might be nothing more than a piece of Pentagonese: an important-sounding paraphrase of 'is true'. But, as we have seen, a correspondence theory can be informative without being in the business of offering a definition. Granted that a commitment to a correspondence theory is a commitment to (TM), the correspondence theorist offers a (putative) explanation of what truth consists in, an account which, by virtue of its reliance on the idea of true propositions being *made true* by something, is substantial and, we shall shortly see, highly controversial.

Typically, this point has not been appreciated by deflationists. A deflationist holds, roughly, that the correctness of

(E) <*p*> is true if and only if *p*

is all that can be said about the truth of propositions, and hence that there can be no property *F* explanatory of truth.[11] And when deflationists are faced by a would-be correspondence theorist of truth, someone who offers the kind of (putative) explanation to which deflationists believe truth to be insusceptible, they usually argue that nothing substantial has been said. Quine, for example, claims that 'the correspondence theory dwindle[s] to disquotation' (1987, p. 214), while Paul Horwich (1990) has contended that

(1) <Snow is white> is *made true* by the fact that snow is white

is nothing but a 'trivial reformulation' (1990, p. 112) of 'an innocuous idea' (ibid., p. 110), namely, that

(2) <Snow is white> is true *because* snow is white.

As I shall make plain in Chapter 6, I share the deflationary attitude towards truth, but it is a mistake to suppose that the correspondence theorist's error is that of lapsing into the utterance of truisms. For,

when (1) is understood as correspondence theorists understand it, it is far from being a mere reformulation of (2). As Horwich himself inadvertently says (ibid., pp. 111–12), (2) commits us only to the idea that if it is true that snow is white, then it is true because 'something in the world' (1990, p. 111), snow, is a certain way: white. So far we are ontologically committed only to snow. But (1), as understood by a correspondence theorist, commits us to the idea that the truth has a truthmaker (here presumed to be a fact): something distinct from the proposition, whose existence entails that the proposition is true. We are thus ontologically committed not only to snow but to something which plays the truthmaking role.

As it turns out, Horwich has recently come to appreciate the controversial nature of the correspondence theorist's claim about the existence of truthmakers. As a result of being rather clearer on the notion of truthmaking, Horwich now recognises that (1) amounts to the claim that

(3) <Snow is white> is true *because* there exists the fact that snow is white (1998, p. 105),

a claim which he correctly identifies as highly contentious (ibid., p. 106). For if propositions are taken to be Russellian in nature - things with objects and properties as constituents - then propositions, when true, are *identical* to facts, and not merely 'similar to them' (ibid., p. 106). If, on the other hand, we take propositions to be thoughts – entities with senses as constituents – we seem to have the opportunity to wield Occam's Razor and identify facts with true thoughts (ibid., p. 106). It is precisely this latter option – the modest identity theory – which I shall advocate. The mistake made by the correspondence theorist is that of taking facts to be truthmakers instead of true thoughts.

2.2 Let us now consider the question of the nature of the entities which may occupy the truthmaking role. I have been assuming up to now that if <*a* is *F*> needs a truthmaker, its truthmaker must be a *fact*: *a's being F*. This, of course, means that the correspondence theorist is committed to a certain conception of the nature of facts. If *a's being F* is to act as a truthmaker, it must be what I shall term a *state of affairs*. It must be a complex of items from what Fregeans term the realm of reference: the reality of which we speak minus our modes of presentation.[12] Specifically, the state of affairs of *a's being F* is supposed to have *a* and *F* – the particular and the universal themselves – as constituents, and is supposed to exist just in case *a* is *F*. The state of affairs is, so to speak, the particular and property bonded together into a complex object.

Armstrong puts the case for facts (that is, states of affairs) being truthmakers like this:

> We are asking what in the world will ensure, make true, underlie, serve as the ontological ground for, the truth that *a* is *F*. The obvious candidate seems to be the state of affairs of *a's being F*. In this state of affairs (fact, circumstance) *a* and *F* are brought together. (1997, p. 116)

The suggestion that truthmakers can only be states of affairs is backed by powerful considerations. Neither *a* nor *F* can be a truthmaker for <*a* is *F*>: both could exist and yet *a* not be *F*.[13] And, as Armstrong himself says (ibid., p. 115), neither can the pair of *a* and *F* do the job, for this too could exist without *a*'s being *F*. (A world in which *a* existed and was not *F*, but in which *b* was *F* would be a world in which this were the case.) The moral Armstrong draws is that the fugitive truthmaker must (like the pair) have *a* and *F* as constituents, but in such a way that it exists only if its constituents are unified; only if, that is, *a* really is *F*. To use Russell's language, a complex can only be a truthmaker if it is a *unity* rather than an *aggregate* (1903, p. 140). This being so, states of affairs appear to be promising candidates for truthmaking because, as conceived of by correspondence theorists, a state of affairs exists just in case a particular has a property or a relation holds between two or more particulars (Armstrong 1997, p. 1).[14]

However, an objector might worry whether we have been too quick to install states of affairs as the best candidates to be truthmakers. Perhaps *tropes*, rather than states of affairs, are best placed for truthmaking. Fully-blown trope theory is characterized by two axioms.[15] First, tropes are particularized properties or relations. What this means can best be explained by contrasting tropes with universals. According to the believer in universals, if *a* is *F*, *a* has the identical property which is had by everything else which is *F*. There is just one property *F*. By contrast, the trope theorist holds that properties cannot be shared by numerically distinct particulars. If *a* is *F* and *b* is *F*, then we have two properties. *The F-ness of a* and *the F-ness of b* are distinct entities. The second axiom of the theory of tropes is that tropes are fundamental, unstructured entities; simples, in other words.[16] The *F-ness of a* is not a complex consisting of *a* and the universal *F*; the trope is not, in other words, a state of affairs. Rather, the *F-ness of a* is a simple entity that cannot be understood in other terms.

Having introduced tropes, it may seem that they are well suited for playing the truthmaking role.[17] If the trope *a's F-ness* exists, then *a* must

indeed be *F* (or so it appears). Furthermore, tropes evade two difficulties which trouble those correspondence theorists who take their truthmakers to be states of affairs. First, if one takes a state of affairs to be the entity that makes <*a* is *F*> true, one is faced with the problem of accounting for how the constituents of the state of affairs, *a* and *F*, can come to be unified, and hence play the truthmaking role. What needs to be explained is how *a* and *F* come to be glued together in such a way that the resulting complex exists only if *a* really is *F*. Obviously, the bringing together of *a* and *F* can be neither set-theoretical nor mereological, since both an ordered *n*-tuple of *a* and *F* and the mereological fusion of *a* and *F* could exist and yet *a* not be *F*. Consequently, it looks like the state of affairs of *a's being F* must be construed as the *instantiation* of *F* by *a*; but, as we shall see presently, the notion of instantiation is itself problematic. This being so, the idea that truthmakers could be tropes – that is, unstructured entities – gains in appeal. Being unstructured, tropes face no analogous problem concerning their unity.

Second, tropes are unproblematically spatio-temporal entities and can be the objects of perception: besides seeing Susan and hearing Eleanor, we see Susan's smile and hear Eleanor's chuckle.[18] This is in contrast to states of affairs. As Armstrong admits, when it comes to states of affairs, 'their location is strange and ambiguous' (1991, p. 195).[19] What this means, as Zeno Vendler has noted (1967a, p. 145), is that facts (construed as states of affairs) are not well placed to do justice to the intuition that empirical truths, if made true by anything at all, are made true by observable chunks of the world.[20] Being straightforwardly observable, tropes encounter no such problem.

None the less, tropes are, I believe, ill-equipped for truthmaking. The reason for this is that tropes seem to me to be *transferable*. Given that the trope *a's F-ness* is a property (albeit a property picked out by means of picking out the particular which happens to have it), it might have been a property of something else. Consequently, the mere existence of the trope does not entail that it is true that *a* is *F*: there is a possible world in which the trope *a's F-ness* exists but, because it is a property of, say, *b* and not *a*, *a* is not *F*. Hence the existence of *a's F-ness* does not guarantee that *a* is *F*.

The claim that tropes are transferable is, of course, controversial.[21] But the intuitions which may tempt us to deny transferability can be explained away easily enough: as the product of mistakenly imbuing with *metaphysical* force the fact that we *identify* tropes by means of the particulars that have them. The trope *a's F-ness* is a particularized property: it is numerically distinct from *b's F-ness*, *c's F-ness* and the rest.

But all that follows from this is that we refer to a trope by means of referring to the particular which has it. What does *not* follow is that *a's F-ness* could not have been a property of something else. In the face of this reasoning, to stipulate that tropes are non-transferable has a whiff of adhocery about it. Especially so, if we follow Armstrong in conceiving of possibility as the free recombination of whatever entities exist in the world. For if this is our view of possibility, and if we take the world to contain non-transferable tropes, then, as Armstrong puts it, we 'put far too much necessity into the world' (1991, p. 194).

Tropes cannot be truthmakers, then, because they are transferable. The would-be correspondence theorist must take the fact-formulated route. Consequently, if we combine the correspondence theorist's commitment to (TM) with the evident truth that facts (construed as states of affairs) are the best candidates to play the truthmaking role, we arrive at what I take to be the correspondence theorist's distinctive claim: that facts act as truthmakers. Distinctive and, as I shall argue in the remainder of this chapter, false. There is a simple reason why we should be reluctant to regard facts as truthmakers: we have no convincing reason to accept (TM): the truthmaker principle. The truthmaking role need not be played by *any* kind of entity. The thesis that every truth must have a truthmaker is not a respectably motivated principle; it is a superstition.

3. On the very idea of truthmaking

As we noted in §2.1, for any correspondence theory of truth to be defensible, the following schema must hold good:

(TM) For <*p*> to be true, there must exist at least one entity, distinct from <*p*>, whose existence entails that <*p*> is true.

An acceptance of (TM), together with the realization that facts (construed as states of affairs) are the most plausible candidates to be truthmakers (§2.2), leads one to the classical, fact-formulated correspondence theory of truth. However, it is my contention that there is no good reason to believe (TM). The problem for the correspondence theorist is that the truthmaking role which she takes facts to perform is just a myth-eaten piece of philosophical dogma.[22]

There are, of course, reasons for wondering whether (TM) can have its intended universal scope. It may be doubted, for example, whether necessary truths and negative truths need truthmakers.[23] But even if (TM) is suitably restricted, it remains to be motivated; and my claim

is that it simply cannot be. A commitment to (TM) can only be the result of some kind of confusion or misunderstanding.[24]

Why must every (contingent, non-negative) truth be made true by something? Notably, correspondence theorists seem to be more interested in developing theories embodying (TM) than in motivating it in the first place. Armstrong, for example, provides no argument for (TM), saying merely that it is 'fairly obvious once attention is drawn to it' (1989, p. 89).[25] But what is so obvious about it? As we have seen,[26] Tarski-style truth-theories explain how sentences come to be true without positing truthmakers: '*a* is *F*' is true just in case the object referred to by '*a*' satisfies the predicate 'is *F*'. As yet there is no reason to suppose that the world must contain either the universal *F or* the state of affairs of *a's being F*. Armstrong, for one, is well aware of this position, but his response to Michael Devitt's (1980) robust statement of it is puzzling:

> First, there may be alternative, and perhaps more satisfying, ways of giving the semantics for '*Fa*'. Devitt offers no argument against this possibility. Second, and more important, the semantics of 'applies' has been left totally obscure. The Realist may well argue, correctly I believe, that a convincing account of the semantics of 'applies' cannot be given without appeal to the properties and/or relations of the object *a*. (1980, pp. 107–8)

The first point does not bear much scrutiny. If Devitt's charge is that we can explain why propositions are true while only being ontologically committed to particulars, then the onus is on the believer in universals and truthmakers to explain why we cannot get by without them. Devitt does not need to argue against the possibility of there being other ways of explaining the semantics of '*a* is *F*'; it is up to the supporter of (TM) to make her case that an ontology of states of affairs is required. And this has not yet been done.

When it comes to Armstrong's second point, one might be forgiven for thinking that we have the basis here of a powerful case for (TM). For it is natural to think that a commitment to universals necessarily brings with it a commitment to facts-as-conceived-of-by-the-correspondence theorist: states of affairs. The argument to this effect goes as follows. Suppose that <*a* is *F*> is true. There are possible worlds in which *a* exists and the universal *F* exists and yet *a* is not *F*. So more than just the existence of the particular and the universal is required, if the proposition in question is to be true. The extra needed is that *a* really *be* (that is, *instantiate*) *F*, and this is equivalent to saying that *a* and *F* are united in a state of affairs.

But this argument is unsound. Let us grant that we can explain how predicates come to apply to particulars only by positing universals. In other words, let us accept that 'is *F*' applies to *a* because the universal picked out by the predicate is instantiated by *a*. The crucial point is that a commitment to particulars instantiating universals does not thereby commit us to complexes of such things: states of affairs. To hold that *a* instantiates *F* is not necessarily to hold that there exists an entity in addition to *a* and *F*: the state of affairs of *a's being F*. No reason has been given as to why we should treat the instantiation of a universal by a particular as *itself* an entity. Someone who appreciates this point is Terence Horgan. Arguing against Jaegwon Kim's conception of events as property-exemplifications at times (Kim 1976), Horgan pithily remarks:

> We can accept attributes, and we can concede that concrete objects exemplify attributes, without also hypostatizing Kim's attribute-exemplifications as entities in their own right. (We can still say that attributes have specific exemplifications, or instantiations. These are not events, but the objects which *possess* the attributes.) (1978, p. 42)

The same point obviously applies to states of affairs. Even if it is accepted that there are good reasons why we should talk of particulars instantiating universals, such talk does not yet commit us ontologically to entities which are *particulars-instantiating-universals*. If *a* instantiates *F*, then there is only ontological commitment to *a* and to *F*.[27]

At this juncture, an objector may make the following reply. Granted, talk of particulars instantiating universals does not bring with it *automatic* ontological commitment to truthmaking states of affairs; but a commitment to such things is the only way of side-stepping the problem of explaining *how* a particular can come to instantiate a universal. As Kit Fine puts it,

> [i]t is not that the existence of the fact is to be explained in terms of the particular exemplifying the relation, since that leaves the nature of the relationship unexplained. Rather the exemplification itself must be explained in terms of the fact. (1982, p. 73)

Armstrong takes the same view.[28] States of affairs, according to Armstrong, are ontologically basic unities, their constituents, particulars and universals, being 'vicious abstractions' from them (1980, pp. 109–10). Hence, the problem of how a particular may instantiate a universal can be explained away as resting on a misunderstanding: namely, that of wrongly taking

particulars and universals to be ontologically prior to states of affairs. While '[i]t is often convenient to talk about instantiation', Armstrong says, 'states of affairs come first. . . . The instantiation of universals by particulars is just the state of affairs itself' (1997, p. 119).

So Fine and Armstrong's idea is this: if the instantiation of universals by particulars (and hence, ultimately, the truth of propositions) is to be explained, we have no choice but to posit entities which are the having of universals by particulars. And these are just states of affairs which make propositions true. So if this line of thought is correct, (TM) stands.

But what are we to make of this attempt to prop up (TM)? Not much. To be sure, Armstrong is right to deny that instantiation is a relation. If it were, it would itself be a universal, and the problem of how *a* comes to instantiate *F* would simply be replaced by the problem of how *a* and *F* come to instantiate the instantiation universal: the same problem, one level up (Armstrong 1980, p. 109). This being so, inverting the order of explanation and *starting* with a unified entity – a state of affairs – might seem to be the only option for someone wishing to avoid embarrassment when it comes to explaining instantiation.

But I fail to see how an appeal to states of affairs can help here. If our problem is that of explaining how a particular may instantiate a universal, we are taken no closer to an answer by simply positing a entity which *is* the instantiation of the universal by the particular. For the problem of how *a* can instantiate *F* just becomes the problem of how *a* and *F* can form a complex whose constituents, unlike those of sets and mereological fusions, are unified. We have merely replaced one unity problem with another and are no further advanced. Philosophical problems cannot be solved by pulling made-to-measure entities out of hats.

It would be as well to be clear as to the nature of my objection. I am not simply saying that it is mysterious how the correspondence theorist's facts can be unified. For this is not just a problem for the correspondence theorist. The old problem of the unity of facts afflicts *any* account of facts, even Frege's. If we follow Frege in taking facts to be true thoughts (as I believe we should), the problem takes the form of the paucity of decent explanation of how a thought differs from a mere list. The unity of states of affairs *per se* is thus not the issue. My point is, rather, that the problem of how a state of affairs can be unified is of *the same kind* as the problem of instantiation, and hence that Armstrong and Fine cannot solve the problem of instantiation by appealing to unified states of affairs. Consequently, any plausibility which this strategy gives to (TM) is illusory.

At this point, however, Armstrong and Fine could charge me with having ignored their claim that states of affairs are ontologically basic.

From their point of view, the unity of states of affairs does not stand in need of explanation. Objects and properties, after all, are just 'vicious abstractions' from states of affairs. Particulars and universals, in other words, cannot be separated, so there is no problem in seeing how they can be unified. But just saying this is of no use, if the resulting position is obscure. What *precisely* is meant by the claim that particulars and universals are 'vicious abstractions' from the things that 'come first': states of affairs?[29]

Armstrong himself is less than forthcoming on this issue, but his talk of the abstraction being *vicious* might suggest the following thesis: properly speaking, particulars and universals are not distinct entities at all; there are only states of affairs. If *a* is *F*, we do not have two distinct entities somehow brought together, but a single entity, a state of affairs, which has two aspects or 'factors' (ibid., p. 109). To this, we can make two replies. The first is *ad hominem*: Armstrong himself holds back from this thesis. He talks of *a* and *F* being 'brought together' in a state of affairs (1997, p. 116), and he also says that states of affairs 'hold their constituents together in a non-mereological form of composition' (ibid., p. 118). Remarks such as these support what Alex Oliver has termed 'the compositional model' of states of affairs (1992, pp. 91–2): the atomist doctrine that particulars and universals are genuine entities which (somehow) combine to from states of affairs. The second reply is that if we take states of affairs to 'come first' in the sense at present under discussion, we immediately forsake any explanatory ambitions. According to the correspondence theorist, a state of affairs is a complex which exists just in case a particular has a property (or a relation holds between two or more particulars). To be then told that particulars and properties are mere 'factors' of states of affairs has one turning in a very small circle indeed.

Talk of states of affairs 'coming first', and of the constituents of states of affairs being 'abstractions', is thus better interpreted in the following, more modest sense: particulars and universals cannot exist apart from each other, but only as constituents of states of affairs. According to this view, particulars and universals are the ultimate atoms of the world, but are always to be found arranged in states of affairs. But if this is so, then my reply to Armstrong and Fine stands. Positing states of affairs cannot help us side-step the problem of instantiation because the unity of states of affairs stands in need of exactly the same kind of explanation as the instantiation of universals by particulars. The question of how *a* and *F* may be 'brought together' (Armstrong 1997, p. 116) to form a unified state of affairs is just a new version of the old problem. All Fine

and Armstrong have done is to 'unite the two factors in an incomprehensible manner' (Armstrong 1980, p. 110).[30]

The moral is this. Even if we are happy with talk of particulars instantiating universals, such talk does not of itself commit us ontologically to the existence of things apt to be truthmakers: states of affairs. And the claim that the positing of such entities enables us to *explain away* instantiation is false: a philosopher making such a claim merely rebottles the old unity problem. Consequently, (TM) remains lacking in proper motivation. An adherence to (TM), and, with it, a correspondence theory of truth, can only be the product of bad faith.

4. The way ahead

The correspondence theorist believes that facts act as truthmakers. This chapter has shown this view to be based upon a principle – (TM) – which has no decent motivation.[31] But when it comes to the question of the nature of facts, I think that we can go one step further. The correspondence theorist, as we have noted, supposes the fact that *a* is *F* to be a state of affairs: a unity comprising the particular and the universal. But if facts are not required to be truthmakers, the most powerful motivation for supposing facts to be states of affairs has vanished. And, significantly, the rival conception of facts as true thoughts, championed by Frege (1918, p. 51), begins to look plausible. As I mentioned in §2.1, on this competing theory of facts, facts and true thoughts do not correspond, but *coincide*. If Frege is right, facts are not located in the realm of reference, but brought within the realm of sense. It is this rival theory that I believe to be correct, although the case for the Fregean view of facts will only be completed at the end of Chapter 4, once the other major reasons for treating facts as states of affairs have been discussed and rejected. By the end of Chapter 4 I shall be in a position to give a final, neat diagnosis of the correspondence theorist's error: she suffers from a kind of double vision, attempting to locate truth in a relation between two items where only one exists. In Chapter 5 we shall see that this criticism of the correspondence theory amounts to an acceptance of the modest identity theory.

Notes

1. Actually, once we discover the essential doctrine of any correspondence theory, we shall see that it is a mistake to number Tarski-style truth-theories among their number. See note 9 below.
2. I presume that propositions are the bearers of truth. Chapters 2 and 3 below are devoted to elaborating, and defending, an ontology of propositions construed as (neo-Fregean) thoughts.
3. I follow Paul Horwich in writing '<*p*>' for 'the proposition that *p*'.
4. For this account of truthmaking, see Fox (1987, p. 189) and Restall (1996, p. 321).
5. As John Fox notes (1987, p. 189), standard usage says that only sentences or propositions can enter into entailment relations. Hence, one might be apprehensive about saying, as (TM) does, that *a thing's existence* can entail that a proposition is true. If you share such a worry about departing from received usage, truthmaking can be explained metalinguistically as follows:

   t is a truthmaker for <*a* is *F*> if and only if <*t* exists> entails <<*a* is *F*> is true> (Oliver 1996, p. 69).

6. J.L. Austin explicitly takes true statements to refer to, rather than depict, their truth-makers (1950, p. 22). The suggestion that the relation between a truth and its truthmaker is a non-pictorial, *sui generis* relation is made by, among others, Kevin Mulligan, Peter Simons and Barry Smith (1984, p. 302).
7. See, for example, Engel (1991, p. 95); Kirkham (1992, p. 20); and David (1994, pp. 8–9). People who buck this trend are Ian McFetridge (1977, pp. 29–42) and John R. Searle (1995, p. 203; 1998, p. 387).
8. One explanation for the tendency to conflate (TM) with the thesis that <*p*> has ontological commitments in the mind-independent world is the fact that '<*p*> is true in virtue of something' tends to be used to express both principles. The result is a mistaken supposition that a conception of truth as correspondence is either itself platitudinous or has, at its core, something that is central to our understanding of the concept. Dummett, for one, is guilty of such slippage, and it leads to claims such as this:

   [T]he correspondence theory expresses one important feature of the concept of truth which is not expressed by the law 'It is true that *p* if and only if *p*' . . . : that a statement is true only if there is something in the world *in virtue of which* it is true. Although we no longer accept the correspondence theory, we remain realists *au fond*; we retain in our thinking a fundamentally realist conception of truth. (Dummett 1959, p. 14)

   (Similar remarks are made in Dummett 1976, pp. 52–3, in which '*x* makes *y* true' and '*y* is true in virtue of *x*' are used interchangeably throughout.)

   In reply to Dummett, we should say that talk of thoughts being 'made true' is by no means uncontroversially a part of *our* conception of truth, even if this conception is realist. We can accept the realist thesis that the ontological commitments of our thoughts are (by and large) mind-independent and yet deny that any of them plays the truthmaking role.

   I agree with Alex Oliver (1996, note 56) that 'in virtue of' should be banned.

9. Donald Davidson once claimed that a Tarski-style truth-theory for a language counts as a correspondence theory because, once such a theory has been constructed, 'truth has been explained, and non-trivially, in terms of a relation between language and something else' (1969, p. 48). It is a familiar point that Tarski-style truth-theories explicate language-relativized concepts of truth,and not what such concepts have in common. But another reason why such theories cannot count as correspondence theories is that they make no ontological commitment to truthmaking entities. In a simple Tarski-style truth-theory the truth of '*a* is *F*' is explained as follows: the sentence is true because the object named by '*a*' satisfies the predicate 'is *F*'. Here there is ontological commitment to *a* only, and not to a truthmaker.
10. McFetridge (1977) made me see that a commitment to truths being *made true* by something is distinct from the project of trying to *define* truth. However, McFetridge's understanding of truthmaking is defective in one, crucial respect. He fails to see that the truthmaking intuition commits the correspondence theorist to the idea that truths are true because the existence of some item entails that they are true. In effect, McFetridge confuses the truthmaking intuition with the platitude that the things we say have ontological commitments, and, hence, ends up arguing that Tarski-style truth-theories embody the truthmaking intuition. Talk of 'truthmaking', he says,

    > should have been seen as expressing the thought that for every sentence which is true there must be some explanation of why it is true. And a Tarski-style theory of truth, for a particular language, seems to yield the essential materials for the construction of such explanations. (1977, p. 42)

    As I explained in note 9 above, Tarski-style truth-theories do not embody the truthmaking intuition because they do not posit entities whose existence entail that truths are true.

    Why does McFetridge lose sight of the distinction between a truth's having ontological commitments and its having a truthmaker? The answer, I believe, is that he too is blinded by the dreaded ambiguous and obfuscatory 'in virtue of' locution (see note 8 above). Tellingly, one of the quotations with which McFetridge introduces the idea of truthmaking is an extract from the passage from Dummett 1959 in which Dummett uses just those offending words: '. . . a statement is true only if there is something in the world *in virtue of which* it is true' (Dummett 1959, p. 14). This is almost guaranteed to obscure things.
11. Actually, as we shall see in Chapter 6 below, the deflationist's benchmark claim is that 'is true' 'exists solely for the sake of a certain logical need' (Horwich 1990, p. 2): namely, that of enabling us to make indirect or compendious assertions. It is because (E)'s correctness equips 'is true' for performing this function that the deflationist concludes that there is no more to truth than the correctness of (E). At this stage, however, such exegetical niceties need not concern us.
12. My understanding of the distinction between the realm of reference and the realm of sense is derived from Dummett (1973, pp. 153–4).
13. Actually, this is a little quick, for we can find truthmakers for certain truths without having to populate the world with proposition-shaped entities. <Susan exists> and <Susan = Susan> both need only Susan herself to exist in

order to be true. None the less, for the overwhelming majority of truths it looks as though we will have to introduce more exotic entities to play the truthmaking role.

14. Donald Davidson, no friend of correspondence theories of truth, agrees that if there are truthmakers, they have to be facts (construed as states of affairs). The correspondence theorist's truthmakers, he claims, had better be 'propositional in character' (1990, p. 304). They must include as constituents 'not only the objects the sentence is "about" . . . but also whatever it is the sentence says about them' (Davidson 1969, p. 49).
15. For an admirably clear explanation of trope theory, see Daly (1997).
16. On this point I am in agreement with D.H. Mellor and Alex Oliver (1997, p. 17).
17. For a detailed defence of the claim that tropes (what they call 'moments') are truthmakers, see Mulligan *et al.* (1984).
18. For arguments that tropes can be the objects of perception, see Mulligan *et al.* (1984), §4.
19. Where, Armstrong asks, can we locate the state of affairs of two objects standing in some relation? One option is to accept that the state of affairs is an abstract entity, an option which Armstrong wishes to resist because he takes the space-time world to be a conjunction of states of affairs (1991, p. 195; 1997, p. 135). On the other hand, to locate the state of affairs in the mereological fusion of the two objects is, Armstrong admits, 'not very pleasant' (1991, p. 195); and, in any case, Armstrong acknowledges that to think of states of affairs as spatio-temporal things 'has a whiff of category-mistake' (ibid., p. 195).
20. As Vendler himself puts it, '[i]f the correspondence theory requires a relation between empirical statements and observable entities in the world, then facts are not qualified for this latter role' (1967a, p. 145).
21. Armstrong himself mentions that C.B. Martin takes tropes to be non-transferable, though he (Armstrong) reaches no firm conclusion on the matter (Armstrong 1989, pp. 117–119).
22. The phrase 'myth-eaten' is culled from Austin (1961, p. 102).
23. There are two reasons why one may wish to restrict (TM) to contingent truths. First, according to an appealing way of characterizing necessity, necessary truths are true irrespective of how the world is, and hence do not need something in the world to exist in order for them to be true. (Such a view was held by Wittgenstein, who believed all necessary truths to be tautologies: propositions which do not describe possible situations (1922, §4.462).) Furthermore, on the standard account of entailment a necessary truth is entailed by anything, and so any entity will be able to serve as a necessary truth's truthmaker. Unless an alternative account of entailment is available, this counterintuitive result is a sign that necessary truths do not have truthmakers.

    The worry concerning whether negative truths have truthmakers is familiar in the old problem of whether the world contains negative states of affairs. Russell believed that there were such things, but had a sense of the oddness of this view (1918, p. 184). I think it is fair to say that most supporters of a version of (TM) would be happier explaining the truth of negative propositions other than by appeal to negative states of affairs. Two alternatives present themselves. We may either say, with Wittgenstein, that a negative

proposition is true because the corresponding positive proposition has no truthmaker; or we may follow David Lewis (1992, p. 216) in holding that a negative proposition is true for lack of a falsemaker.

24. The sentiment expressed here is clearly Davidsonian. Presuming states of affairs (he calls them 'facts') to be the only realistic candidates to be truthmakers, Davidson says,

    > [n]othing . . . , no *thing*, makes sentences and theories true: not experience, not surface irritations, not the world, can make a sentence true. *That* experience takes a certain course, that our skin is warmed or punctured, that the universe is finite, these facts, if we want to talk that way, make sentences and theories true. But this point is put better without mention of facts. The sentence 'My skin is warm' is true if and only if my skin is warm. Here there is no reference to a fact, a world, an experience, or a piece of evidence. (1974a, p. 194)

25. My attention was drawn to this remark by Oliver (1996, p. 72).
26. See note 9 above.
27. So it follows that Armstrong is wrong to say that the dispute between the realist and the nominalist concerning universals is a dispute, as he puts it, over whether the world is made up of states of affairs or of things (1980, p. 111). If my reasoning is correct, a commitment to the existence of universals need not bring with it a commitment to the existence of states of affairs.
28. As does Oliver (1996, p. 72).
29. Armstrong's appeal to Frege's metaphor of 'unsaturatedness' (1980, p. 110) can be of no help in this regard. As Mark Sainsbury (1996, p. 146) has noted, this merely *labels* the desired unity. For more on this, see Chapter 3, §5.3 below.
30. These are *Armstrong's* own words (1980, p. 110).
31. In denying that facts are truthmakers I find myself in considerable sympathy with Davidson's claim that correspondence theories 'fail to provide entities to which truth vehicles . . . can be said to correspond' (1990, p. 304). However, this is for the reasons given in the text and not because I endorse the notorious 'slingshot' argument for this conclusion. (Davidson fires the slingshot in his 1967a, 1969, 1990 and 1996. For a clear explanation of why it misses its target, see Sainsbury (1991, pp. 243–50).)

2
Propositions, Indirect Speech and Truthbearers

1. Introduction

Correspondence theorists of truth think that facts are needed to play the truthmaking role. In the previous chapter I argued that this conception of facts is by no means obligatory because the truthmaker principle is itself lacking a respectable motivation. This conclusion, at one stroke, undermines the main reason for supposing facts to be states of affairs: complexes of entities from the realm of reference. But if facts are not states of affairs, what *are* they? My answer, as I suggested at the end of the previous chapter, is that facts are *true thoughts*, where a thought is understood to be a proposition construed along (roughly) Fregean lines: something with senses, as opposed to entities from the realm of reference, as constituents.[1] However, the idea that our ontology should include thoughts is controversial; so before the identification of facts with true thoughts can be argued for, the case for the existence of thoughts must be made.

My argument for an ontology of thoughts has two stages. In the present chapter, I argue for the existence of propositions, their precise character remaining open at this stage. Once the question of the existence of propositions has been settled, I shall go on to argue in Chapter 3 that the best account of their nature treats them as (neo-Fregean) thoughts, before defending an ontology of such entities against objections. By the end of Chapter 3, it should be clear what the identification of facts with true thoughts amounts to.

2. On saying that: Davidson's account emended

2.1 The defender of propositions regards them as playing a number of distinct roles. First and foremost, propositions are entities which are the contents of declarative sentences and the *things said* by utterances of such sentences. If Susan sincerely utters 'Julian is unreliable', then the content of the sentence she utters and the thing which she says in uttering it are one and the same: <Julian is unreliable>. In addition, since propositions are both the contents of declarative sentences and the objects of acts of *saying*, propositions are things that may be true or false. However, propositions are not just things that are said: propositions are the objects of all of the propositional attitudes. Susan's believing that Julian is unreliable consists in the obtaining of a relation between Susan and <Julian is unreliable>, and similar stories can be told about wishes, desires and the rest.

The story I have just told is, of course, controversial. For one thing, many philosophers have hesitated before reifying the contents of declarative sentences. And there are, besides propositions, plenty of other candidates to be the vehicles of truth. Furthermore, the thesis that the propositional attitudes relate thinking subjects to propositions may be denied either by repudiating the idea that the propositional attitudes are relational, or by claiming that they relate thinkers to things other than propositions. I shall address rejoinders such as these in due course. For the time being, it should be noted that there is far less controversy surrounding the question of the characteristics propositions have, *if* they exist. First of all, propositions are *abstract*: they are not located in space. It makes no sense to ask *where* <Julian is unreliable> is. Besides this, propositions are *language-independent* and *mind-independent* in the following senses: they exist before they are first expressed or entertained. A proposition, in Frege's words, 'needs no owner. It is not true only from the time when it is discovered; just as a planet, even before anyone saw it, was in interaction with other planets' (Frege 1918, p. 45). Finally, propositions have their *truth conditions necessarily*. Whereas 'Julian is unreliable' might have meant something else, and hence had different truth conditions, <Julian is unreliable> has the same truth conditions in every possible world.

Why suppose propositions to exist? I shall give two reasons. In §3 I claim that propositions are best placed to be the bearers of truth. But before that, I shall argue that the best available account of the logical form of propositional attitude-ascriptions, a necessary emendation of Davidson's celebrated paratactic account (1968), ontologically commits us to such things.

2.2 According to Davidson, the logical form of a sentence in indirect speech, such as

(1) Lois Lane said that Superman can fly,

is represented by

(2) Said (Lois Lane, that). Superman can fly.

That is to say, Davidson supposes (1) to consist of *two sentences paratactically joined*: 'Superman can fly', whose constituent expressions have their usual semantic properties, and which is true if and only if Superman can fly; and 'Lois Lane said that', in which 'that' is a demonstrative which refers to an event: the reporter's utterance of 'Superman can fly'.[2] This logical form proposal is coupled with an informal gloss on the relation expressed by the 'said' of indirect discourse, a gloss which is supposed to explain how Lois can stand in that relation to an utterance of 'Superman can fly' made by a reporter. Lois stands in that relation to such an utterance just in case she herself produced an utterance that matches it in content. So

(4) Lois Lane said that

is glossed as

(5) Some utterance of Lois Lane's and my next utterance make us samesayers.

With this account of *oratio obliqua* in place, it is natural to follow Davidson in regarding it as the basis of a general 'paratactic analysis of attributions of attitude' (1975, p. 166). The logical form of any propositional attitude-ascription will be along the lines of (2); presumably, the gloss on the predicate expressing the relation between thinking subject and utterance will change from attitude to attitude.

In §2.3 I shall explain what the Davidsonian analysis of attitude ascriptions has going for it. In the remainder of §2 I shall argue that it none the less has to be emended so that the demonstrative 'that' refers to the *proposition* expressed by the reporter's utterance of the content-sentence rather than to that utterance itself. The emendation thus commits us to the existence of propositions.

2.3 Sentences in indirect speech, and attitude-attributions generally, look like being counter-examples to the principle of extensionality.[3] Although it is true that

(1) Lois Lane said that Superman can fly,

and Superman is Clark Kent, Lois did not say that Clark Kent can fly. The beauty of Davidson's proposal is that it enables us to regard (1) as extensional without thereby committing us to following Frege (1892) in treating the words following 'said that' as no longer having their customary referents. There need be no abandonment of the principle of semantic innocence.[4]

Here is how it is done. As we have seen, if Davidson is correct, the logical form of (1) is not that of the content-sentence embedded within a 'that'-clause; the content-sentence is semantically distinct from the sentence ending with 'that' (which functions as a demonstrative, referring to the following utterance of the content-sentence). Because there are two sentences and not one, the apparent failure of extensionality may be explained away without sacrificing our semantic innocence: substitutions within the utterance of the content-sentence cannot change *its* truth-value; and while such substitutions can, of course, cause the utterance of the *reporting* sentence to change its truth-value (because they change the referent of 'that'), this does not constitute an exception to the principle of extensionality because the two utterances are semantically independent.

But if we now know how Davidson's analysis of attitude-attributions manages to perform the trick, it has not yet been explained why the trick needed to be performed. Well, there are a couple of reasons why we should rejoice that Davidson has managed to reconcile extensionality with semantic innocence. First, both principles are persuasive enough to justify our regarding them as exceptionless. Second, no other analysis looks to have satisfactorily effected such a reconciliation. Let me explain.

That neither of the two principles should be compromised is suggested by the following considerations. If we first of all consider the principle of extensionality, we may note at once that it is motivated by a powerful intuition and a convincing argument. The intuition is simple: a sentence containing a singular term and a predicate is true or false depending upon whether the predicate is true of the object referred to by the singular term; *how* the object is referred to can make no difference to the truth-value of a sentence containing it (Dummett 1973, p. 187). Now for the argument: an argument with two lemmas. First, as Strawson has remarked, the claim that understanding a sentence is knowing its truth condition is 'a generally harmless and salutary thing to say' (1969, p. 186). Second, if languages are to be learnable, they

must be compositional: the meanings of sentences must be systematically determined by those of their parts and their manner of combination. With these two lemmas argued for, it is highly intuitive to hold that a natural language's compositional semantics must take the form of a Tarski-style truth-theory (1944, 1956).[5] For Tarski-style truth-theories are compositional theories which entail a specification of truth conditions for each sentence of the language from a finite number of axioms; and what is more, such theories also offer a non-metaphorical account of just how the meanings of sentences are determined by those of their parts. However, such truth-theories are extensional, so it follows that it is a *desideratum* of any account of a fragment of a natural language, such as an indirect speech report, that extensionality be preserved.

Moving on to consider the principle of semantic innocence, this too accords with our pre-theoretical intuitions. To the person uncontaminated by semantic theory, it would seem bizarre to suggest that words following 'said that' refer to anything else but the items that they refer to when used outside such contexts. It seems obvious that the words 'Superman can fly', when used to specify what Lois has said, can only mean what they mean when they are used simply to state how things are (Hornsby 1986, p. 198).

None the less, when it comes to two main rivals to Davidson's logical form proposal, what I shall term *the standard account* and the alternative account proposed by A.N. Prior (1963), we see that, since they both construe (1) as a single sentence, extensionality can only be preserved by abandoning semantic innocence. According to the standard account, the logical form of (1) is represented as

(6) Said (Lois Lane, that Superman can fly).

That is to say, the report is taken to be a single sentence consisting of a two-place predicate, 'said', and two singular terms: 'Lois Lane', which refers to Lois Lane; and 'that Superman can fly', which refers to the thing she is claimed to have said. Accordingly, an utterance of (1) would seem to be true just in case the predicate is satisfied by the ordered pair of Lois Lane and the thing which she is claimed to have said; just in case, that is, the saying relation of indirect discourse holds between Lois Lane and the thing putatively said by her.

Prior, by contrast, takes (1) to consist of a name and a sentence on either side of an expression, 'said that', which 'is like a predicate at one end . . . and like a sentential connective at the other end' (1963, p. 126). On Prior's view, 'said that' no more expresses a two-term relation than does 'is a man and', and it is a mistake to think that (1) contains

a referring-expression which names a thing said (a proposition or utterance). Consequently, we might represent Prior's way of dividing (1) as

(7) Lois Lane / Said that / Superman can fly.

The differences between the standard account and Prior's proposal are, then, plain to see. However, both proposals can only preserve extensionality by taking the words following 'said that' to change their reference. For as long as it is admitted that

(1) Lois Lane said that Superman can fly

and

(8) Lois Lane said that Clark Kent can fly

differ in truth-value,[6] the presumption of extensionality demands a reference-shift account of the words of the content-sentence. Frege, of course, noted that expressions with the same sense (which present the referent in the same way) may be substituted *salva veritate* after 'said that', and, as a result, sought to preserve extensionality by taking the words of the content-sentence to refer to their *customary senses* (1892, p. 65). Consequently, Frege supposed the thing Lois Lane said, the thing named by 'that Superman can fly', to be the *thought* expressed by the *oratio recta* sentence 'Superman can fly': a proposition construed as having senses as constituents. The supporter of Prior's account, although denying that (1) commits us ontologically to things said, must also, it seems, give up his semantic innocence. For Prior's hybrid expression 'said that' introduces an intensional context after the 'that'. Consequently, extensionality can only be preserved, if the words following 'said that' are taken to change their reference. The crucial point is this: given that both the standard account and Prior's account treat attitude-ascriptions as *single sentences*, there is no other way of preserving extensionality. Davidson is only able to reconcile extensionality with semantic innocence by precisely denying that the content-sentence is semantically connected with the attribution of a saying.

2.4 At this point, it might be objected that the acceptance of semantic innocence has been insufficiently motivated. Perhaps its loss should be viewed as a kind of rite of semantic passage: something that we must all go through if we are to think about *oratio obliqua* reports maturely. If this were true, it would follow that Davidson's paratactic account, emended or not, is simply not required.

Dummett has taken just this line. Dummett agrees with Frege that (1) is best represented as

(6) Said (Lois Lane, that Superman can fly),

and, what is more, he accepts the reference-shift account of the words of the content-sentence which is needed to preserve extensionality. Specifically, Dummett is happy to accept the Fregean view that words following 'said that' refer to their customary senses. Indeed, when charged with too easily surrendering his semantic innocence, Dummett forcefully argues that Frege's reference-shift account is not counter-intuitive at all, but 'entirely natural' (1973, p. 266). According to Dummett, a sentence following 'said that' has a different function than it has in other contexts, and hence we should not be unduly perturbed by Frege's proposal that its constituent expressions change their reference therein:

> When we use a sentence in other contexts, we are using it to express a sense (a thought), but we are not *talking about* that thought: but when I say ['Lois Lane said that Superman can fly'], I am talking *about* the sense of [her] words, about the thought which [s]he expressed; and I use the sentence in the subordinate clause to refer to that thought. (ibid., p. 266)

But what are we to make of this? The small grain of truth in Frege's account of indirect speech is its ontological commitment to propositions. And, as we shall see in Chapter 3, Frege (and Dummett) are right to view propositions as thoughts. Furthermore, Dummett is correct in thinking that the point of an indirect speech report is to 'give the sense' (ibid., p. 265) of an utterance made by the subject of the report, and hence right to suppose that an utterer of (1) talks about a thought. But we can accept this without going down the road of supposing that it is the *content-sentence*, embedded within a 'that'-clause, which refers to a thought, and hence without holding that its constituent expressions refer to senses. The fact that an utterer of (1) talks about the thought expressed by 'Superman can fly' shows that the words of the content-sentence change their reference only if the only candidate for referring to the thought is the 'that'-clause. But, as we shall see now, it is not.

If, as I shall suggest, we revise Davidson's account merely by taking the demonstrative 'that' to refer to the *proposition* expressed by the content-sentence (and if the arguments in Chapter 3 for taking propositions to be thoughts are sound), then we can make the following reply to Dummett. According to the emended paratactic account of sentences in indirect speech, the words of the content-sentence have their customary senses and referents, and hence the content-sentence is used to

express, and not to refer to, a thought. None the less, a reporter uttering (1) *does* refer to a thought. Crucially, however, the referring expression is the demonstrative 'that'. The words following 'said' do not *themselves* refer to the thought; in virtue of having their usual function, they enable reference to the thought to be made by the demonstrative. (A reporter is able to demonstrate the thought because her following utterance expresses it.) This way, justice can be done to Dummett's intuition that the purpose of uttering (1) is to talk about a thought without there being any consequent slippage towards the counter-intuitive conclusion that words following 'said that' change their reference. The revised Davidsonian account enables us to disentangle the correct intuition ('when I say ['Lois Lane said that Superman can fly'], I am talking *about* the sense of her words') from Dummett's uncompulsory way of accommodating it ('I use the sentence in the subordinate clause to refer to that thought'). We need not pretend that an abandonment of semantic innocence is natural in any way.

There is a second worry with the Fregean claim that expressions in propositional attitude contexts refer to their customary senses: how may the Fregean cope with iterated propositional attitude constructions? If Frege is correct, the words following 'said that' in (1) refer to their customary senses. Accordingly, because the sense of an expression determines its reference, and because the reference of the words has changed, their sense must have changed too. A Fregean must therefore say that in contexts of indirect speech, and attitude contexts generally, an expression not only has an 'indirect' referent (its customary sense) but an indirect sense. But, as Dummett (1973, p. 267) has noted, the thesis that words in *oratio obliqua* have an indirect sense is shrouded in mystery. For sure, we know what the indirect referent of an expression is: its customary sense. But granted that reference does not determine sense (that the relation between sense and reference is many-one), it follows that this is not enough to determine what its indirect sense is to be.

Now let us consider double *oratio obliqua*, such as

(9) Eleanor said that Lois Lane said that Superman can fly.

It is plausible to think that embedding

(1) Lois Lane said that Superman can fly

within another occurrence of 'said that' has the same effect on it as did 'said that' on 'Superman can fly'; so a Fregean must take the words comprising the content-sentence in (9) to have a doubly indirect reference

and a doubly indirect sense. This means that the expressions following the second occurrence of 'said that' in (9) must refer to their (singly) indirect senses. But because we cannot say what these singly indirect senses are, it follows, in Dummett's words, 'that we cannot even know how to judge the truth-value of a sentence involving double *oratio obliqua*' (ibid., p. 267).

Given Dummett's protestations as to the naturalness of Frege's analysis, we should expect him to offer the Fregean a response to the problem of iterated *oratio obliqua* constructions. This he does by simply denying that expressions may have an indirect sense at all (ibid., pp. 267–8). According to Dummett, the words following 'said that' in (1) have an indirect reference (their customary sense), but they do not change their sense: they refer to and express the same thing. Consequently, these same words, when following the second occurrence of 'said that' in (9), have the same sense and reference as they have in (1). 'There is', says Dummett,

> no reason to think that an expression occurring in double *oratio obliqua* has a sense or a reference different from that which it has in single *oratio obliqua*: its referent in double *oratio obliqua* will be the sense it has in single *oratio obliqua*, which is the same as the sense it has in ordinary contexts, which is the same as its referent in single *oratio obliqua*. (ibid., p. 268)

If there is no such thing as indirect sense, then there is no problem. Furthermore, argues Dummett, this solution is 'intuitively reasonable' (ibid., p. 263) because expressions with the same sense may be intersubstituted *salva veritate* within both single and double *oratio obliqua*. According to Dummett, Frege's troubles with iterated *oratio obliqua* constructions are merely the result of 'a mechanical deduction from a slightly faulty theory' (ibid., p. 269).

But the 'slightly faulty' theory cannot be put right by insisting, as Dummett does, that '[t]he sense of a word may . . . be such as to determine it to stand for one thing in one kind of context, and for a different thing in some other kind of context' (ibid., p. 268). It is surely incredible to believe that a singular term may keep its customary sense even though its referent changes from being an external object to being a way of thinking of that object. And when it comes to the senses of sentences – thoughts – we are entitled to ask: how can the sentence 'Superman can fly' have the same sense (that is, express the same information) as it usually does if it is now *about* a way of thinking about

Superman instead of Superman himself? The intuitive force behind the thesis that sense determines reference is that sentences express different information if they are about different things. (To give information, after all, is to report on how things stand in the world.) So reports about different things count as different reports. To deny this principle, merely for the sake of preserving a Fregean treatment of indirect speech, is to lose one's sense of philosophical proportion.

For this reason, we should conclude, not that the Fregean account of indirect speech is 'slightly faulty', but that it is untenable. We should most definitely remain in the market for an account of propositional attitude-ascriptions that preserves extensionality without causing us to abandon our pre-Fregean semantic innocence. Davidson's paratactic account (or, at least, an emendation thereof) would seem to fit the bill nicely.

2.5 Though elegant and ingenious, Davidson's account is, none the less, unsatisfactory as it stands. Three decisive objections to Davidson's treatment of indirect discourse have been raised by Ian McFetridge (1976), Stephen Schiffer (1987) and John McDowell (1980) respectively. However, as we shall see in the following discussion, it is not the logical form proposal *per se*, but Davidson's account of the ontology concomitant on it (his conception of things said as utterances), that is at fault. We may reply to each objection by making the relatively simple emendation hinted at in §2.4 above: that of taking the demonstrative in the reporting utterance to refer to the *proposition* expressed by the utterance of the content-sentence.

Let me introduce McFetridge's objection first (1976, p. 13): the so-called 'counting problem'. The problem emerges when we imagine the following monologue:

(10) Superman can fly.
Lois Lane said that.
Superman can fly.
That's another thing Lois Lane said.

Once it is accepted that Lois uttered only one sentence, 'Superman can fly', we will want to say that the final sentence of (10) is false. Davidson, however, is unable to account for this result. Because Davidson holds that things said are utterances of the ascriber, and because the two occurrences of 'that' in (10) name different utterances (utterances of the first and third sentences of (10) respectively), it follows that the final sentence of (10) has the wrong truth-value. It comes out true. If things said are utterances, Lois Lane said as many different things as there are distinct

reporting utterances which match Lois's in content. As McFetridge himself puts it, 'producing more and more such utterances we can multiply at will the number of things said by [her], which is absurd' (1976, p. 19).

The second objection to Davidson's theory, that which Schiffer regards as 'really urgent' (1987, p. 133), is that if the demonstrative in

(2) Said (Lois Lane, that). Superman can fly

is understood as Davidson intends it to be, as referring to an event of utterance, then (2) and

(1) Lois Lane said that Superman can fly

are inequivalent. Let us first of all focus on (1). One can understand an utterance of (1) if and only if one understands the words following 'said that'; that is, if and only if one knows what Lois Lane (putatively) said. Let us now focus on (2). According to Davidson, in an utterance of (2), the demonstrative in the reporting sentence refers to the utterance of 'Superman can fly' that follows it. It is, however, quite possible to grasp that such an event has been demonstrated *without* knowing its content: one could succeed in picking out that occurrence in space and time while thinking of it only as someone's coming out with a sequence of noises. But this means that someone could pick out the utterance demonstrated using 'that', and know that some utterance of Lois's matches it in content, without knowing the content of either utterance. As a result, while it is plainly impossible to understand an utterance of (1) without knowing what Lois said, the same thing is not true when it comes to (2) as Davidson understands it.

Added to this pair of objections is a third (McDowell 1980, pp. 210–11), which charges Davidson's conception of things said with being incompatible with his own aim of providing a compositional truth-theoretic semantics for natural languages. Such a semantic theory will generate specifications of truth conditions for utterances of sentences constructed out of familiar parts in familiar ways but which have never been spoken. That is to say, it will have theorems specifying the truth conditions of things that are sayable but have not been said. A compositional semantics, amongst other things, aims to tell us what a person *would* be saying, *if* certain utterances were hers. But if this is so, then such things had better not be concrete, particular events because the notion of a concrete event which has not occurred is as obscure as that of a nonexistent object (ibid., p. 210). Consequently, although he does not recognise it, Davidson's own approach to the theory of meaning commits him to the demonstrated entities in *oratio obliqua* reports being other

than concrete events of utterance. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to treat this point as *ad hominem* only; for, as we saw in §2.2, the truth-theoretic approach to meaning is backed by weighty considerations. Merely thinking about the nature of the best available approach to the theory of meaning prompts an appreciation that things said cannot be events of utterance.

These objections reveal that Davidson's paratactic logical form proposal will not do as it stands. However, we should be careful not to be too hasty in rejecting it wholesale; for its beauty is that it preserves extensionality without thereby relieving us of our semantic innocence. Given that it is his conception of things said that leads him into trouble, the following strategy is a promising one: accept the main thrust of Davidson's logical form proposal, but have the demonstrative refer to an entity which is such as to avoid the three objections that we have just discussed.

2.6 The revisionary conception of things said that is perhaps most in keeping with Davidson's own views is offered by McDowell (1980, pp. 210–14). McDowell notes that Davidson takes there to be no fundamental difference between conceptions of truth as a property of utterances and as a relation between sentences, speakers and times. And, argues McDowell, this connection between the two truth predicates clears the way for a reconstrual of utterances:

> We can certainly effect a simple connection between [the two truth predicates] if we construe utterances as ordered triples of sentences, persons and times, so that what appears in one theory as a relation between three items becomes, in the other, a monadic property of a triple. But if utterances are construed in this way, there is no doubting the existence of utterances which do not get uttered. . . . Given the existence of the relevant sentence, person and time, the existence of an utterance is guaranteed by part of set theory, whether the person utters the sentence at the time or not. . . . On this construal, utterances are not concrete but abstract particulars. (ibid., p. 212)

On its most natural reading, this passage sees McDowell identifying utterances with ordered triples of sentences, persons and times. But although this manoeuvre enables McDowell to come up with a conception of utterances which allows that some utterances have not yet been made, it is far from clear that he has an adequate reply to the first two objections to Davidson's account. Let us reconsider Schiffer's objection.

The problem for Davidson is that it is possible to grasp a demonstration of an utterance (construed as an event) without knowing its content. Is such a phenomenon ruled out if utterances are identified with ordered triples of sentences, persons and times? If a sentence is taken to be a series of marks or sounds, then it seems not: it is quite possible to pick out a sequence such as

(11) <<'Superman can fly', Eleanor, 2.00 p.m. on 10 August 1999>>[7],

given that its first term is just a series of shapes or sounds, without knowing what Eleanor said, and hence without knowing the content of the utterance of Lois Lane's which it matches in content. Of course, this presupposes that inscriptional or phonetic match is sufficient for word-identity, something that McDowell questions.[8] An alternative view holds that for two token words to be type-identical they must also have the same meaning.[9] And if this conception of word-identity is correct, an ordered triple of a sentence, person and time could not be successfully demonstrated without knowing the sentence's meaning, and hence without being in a position to know the utterance's content.

This need not be the place to discuss the merits of rival conceptions of word-identity. For although it might be argued that McDowell may successfully reply to Schiffer's objection, he cannot get round that of McFetridge. Let us see why. When Lois uttered 'Superman can fly' she said as many things as she came by her utterance at that time to stand to in the saying relation; and Lois Lane stands in the saying relation to something if it matches her utterance in content. But even if utterances are construed as ordered triples of sentences, speakers and times, there may be a plethora of such matching subsequent utterances and hence a plethora of things Lois said at that time. One example should suffice to illustrate this point. Let us suppose that Eleanor uttered

(1) Lois Lane said that Superman can fly

at 2.00 p.m. on 10 August 1999 and that Susan uttered the same words ten minutes later. Obviously, if utterances are construed as McDowell suggests, then their respective utterances which match Lois's in content (the utterances demonstrated by the 'that') are different. Eleanor's utterance is (11) while Susan's utterance is

(12) <<'Superman can fly', Susan, 2.10 p.m. on 10 August 1999>>.

Obviously, the two sequences, (11) and (12), are distinct because they differ in their membership; but they both match Lois's in content, and

so, because there are as many things said by Lois as there are matching utterances, she said two things (at least) at that time; and so the absurdity noted by McFetridge remains.

Naturally, all of this presumes that McDowell identifies utterances *with*, rather than merely *via*, ordered triples. (To be sure, it is the most obvious reading of the suggestion that we 'construe utterances as ordered triples' and treat truth as 'a monadic property of a triple'.) Clearly, the objection would not stand if McDowell were taken as saying merely that we may *pinpoint* an utterance by virtue of noting who made it, at what time and with which words; it could be that the two triples above were, in effect, two ways of recognising the same thing. But this is not the view suggested by McDowell's text; and, more importantly, it would not really help matters if it were. The project upon which we have embarked is that of finding an appropriate sort of entity to serve as the referent of the demonstrative in attitude-ascriptions. We need to know not merely how we pick out such things; we must know *what they are*.

We thus cannot repair Davidson's theory by taking the thing demonstrated by 'that' in an *oratio obliqua* report to be an ordered triple of a sentence, a person and a time; and the claim that it may be identified *via* such a thing, though interesting, does not answer our question. So what sort of thing must the referent of the demonstrative in (2) be, if the desired emendation is to be possible? In answering this question, we can draw upon our discussion up to now. First, as McFetridge has remarked, if we are to get round the counting problem, things said 'must be things utterances can be of, not utterances themselves' (1976, p. 21). Another way of putting this point is to say that things said cannot be particulars, whether concrete (as Davidson thinks) or abstract (as McDowell thinks of them). The only way of avoiding the consequence that Lois Lane said as many things as there are subsequent matching utterances is to allow things said to be *repeatable*. Second, if Schiffer's objection is to be stymied, what is demonstrated must be such that one knows that Lois Lane said it if and only if one knows its content. Utterances (as construed by Davidson) fail to fit the bill precisely because they do not meet this condition; McDowellian utterances *may* meet this condition if a richer account of word-identity is accepted.

McFetridge's own suggestion is that things said are sets of utterances (construed as events of utterance). More precisely, a thing said is a set of utterances such that there is at least one such utterance (the 'binder' of the set) which reports all and only the members of the set (ibid., pp. 25–6). Consequently, according to McFetridge,

> the demonstrative 'that' in attributions of sayings is characteristically uttered in the presence of an ensuing utterance, but . . . its referent is not that utterance but the set of utterances bound by that utterance, a set of which that utterance will be a member. (ibid., p. 25)

But such an account will not do for two reasons. First, it is an undoubted truth that some things have never been said; and this is something that must be acknowledged if we are to be able to say that there are truths which have never been expressed. But, by definition, such a truth has not been uttered, so there is no utterance which may either be bound or act as a binder. So how can McFetridge account for the fact that many things have gone unsaid? He cannot identify every unsaid thing with the null set; such a drastic move would obviously fail to individuate such things finely enough. He may, of course, choose to interpret the quantifier in 'there are things which have never been said' substitutionally. But this will not help either. Such a move only *delays* ontological commitment to things that might have been said because 'said' should still be construed as a two-place predicate in any appropriate substitution instance; and it has been pointed out already that the idea that there are possible concrete events is of dubious coherence.

The second drawback with McFetridge's construction of things said is that it cannot allow for the possibility of the makers of distinct *oratio obliqua* reports concurring about the thing Lois said. To return to our earlier example, Eleanor uttered (1) at 2.00 p.m. and Susan uttered (1) ten minutes later. According to McFetridge, the thing Eleanor claimed Lois said is the set of utterances bound by Eleanor's own utterance of 'Superman can fly', while the thing Susan claimed she said is the set of utterances bound by Susan's utterance of the same sentence. But the crucial point is that these are *distinct sets*: because Susan's utterance took place ten minutes after Eleanor's, the set of utterances bound by Susan's utterance of 'Superman can fly' has one more member than the set of utterances bound by Eleanor's utterance, namely Susan's own utterance. This state of affairs has troublesome consequences: granted that sets cannot change their membership, and granted that McFetridge does not wish to allow that Susan's utterance was bound by Eleanor's utterance *before Susan made it* (that is, before Susan's utterance existed), it follows that it is impossible for Susan's utterance of the demonstrative 'that' to refer to the entity referred to by Eleanor's 'that'. In other words, McFetridge finds himself committed to the thesis that Susan and Eleanor claim Lois to have said *different things*. But it is obvious that Susan and Eleanor are in perfect agreement about what Lois said, so this makes for a compelling *reductio*.[10]

What should be concluded from this? Not simply that things said are things that utterances are *of*. The moral we should draw is much more precise. The *of* relation holding between an utterance and a thing said cannot be the relation that holds between an utterance and a set of which it is a member. For the identity of a set is determined wholly by its membership, and it is this fact that underlies the flaws in McFetridge's account outlined above. It is far more plausible to take the *of* relation that holds between utterance and thing said to be that which holds between *a token and a type*, the latter being, in Ian Rumfitt's words (1993, p. 448), 'an abstract entity whose identity does not depend upon the identity of its members, but instead depends upon the *condition* which a token meets or *would have to meet* in order to instantiate it'. I shall return to this when I introduce the idea of treating thoughts as utterance-types in Chapter 3.

For the time being, it is enough to notice that the objections of McFetridge and Schiffer may be bypassed, if the referent of the demonstrative 'that' in an utterance of (1) is taken to be the content of the utterance following it: the proposition it expresses. On this view, if (1) is true, Lois Lane stands in the saying relation to the *content* of a reporter's utterance of 'Superman can fly', and not to the utterance itself, so '[t]he number of distinct things said by [Lois Lane] on an occasion [does] not depend on the number of distinct utterances to which [s]he stood in the original saying relation but on how many distinct things these utterances were of' (McFetridge 1976, pp. 20–1).[11] Furthermore, if the thing demonstrated by a reporter's utterance of (1) is the content that is shared by her utterance of 'Superman can fly' and some utterance of Lois Lane's, Schiffer's objection dissolves. To know what the reference of 'that' is, one *must* know its content because what is demonstrated *is* a content.[12]

Once such an emendation is made, we remain free to accept Davidson's fundamental insight, namely that the principle of extensionality does not break down in contexts of indirect discourse (and propositional attitude-contexts across the board). That is to say, we may still agree with Davidson that such reports consist of *two* utterances, and that there is not, semantically speaking, a 'that'-clause at all. Besides this, the Davidsonian demand that the words of the content-sentence do not change their semantic function is still met. According to the suggested emendation, the words following 'that' have their customary senses and referents; it is just that the demonstrative refers not to an utterance, but to its content: a proposition. The best available analysis of the logical form of attitude-ascriptions commits us to the existence of propositions.[13]

3. Propositions as truthbearers

3.1 The second reason for supposing propositions to exist is that they are the items best placed to be the bearers of truth. However, before we argue for this, we must be sure that the role in question need be occupied by any kind of entity at all. That is to say, we must first of all establish that truth is a property: something which may be borne. I shall argue for this claim now. In §3.3 I shall suggest that propositions are the best available candidates for being the breed of things which are true and false.

The evidence for truth's being a genuine property is that 'is true' has a syntactic role whose explanation requires us to view it as a predicate. The role in question is that of enabling us to make indirect endorsements of assertions, as in

(13) What Susan just said is true,

or compendious such endorsements, as in

(14) Whatever Susan says is true.

If we want to agree with what Susan has just said without specifying it, or if we want to agree with everything that Susan says, we go up a step and attribute truth to vehicles of truth, the function of the truth-predicate being that of *cancelling* such semantic ascent: of enabling us to talk about the world *by* talking about things that are true. As Quine puts it, when it comes to a generalization such as (14),

> if we want to affirm some infinite lot of sentences that we can demarcate only by taking about the sentences, then the truth predicate has its use. We need it to restore the effect of objective reference when for the sake of some generalization we have resorted to semantic ascent. (Quine 1970, p. 12)

The reason why the truth predicate can function as a device for cancelling semantic ascent is that the uncontroversial instances of

(E) <*p*> is true if and only if *p*

hold; so to describe a sentence as true is equivalent to asserting it. But if we only ever spoke of the truth of singularly given propositions, 'is true' would not be a genuine predicate; for it can always be removed from such occurrences without semantic loss. The need for a truth predicate only arises for cases such as (13) and (14). It is because we need to take

indirect attitudes to, and generalize with respect to, things people say or believe, that we need a truth predicate: something which expresses a genuine *property* of truth. If there were no such term, our language would lack some of the expressive power that it in fact has.

3.2 The obvious rejoinder to this claim about the utility of the truth predicate is to claim that the logical forms of (13) and (14) can be represented using propositional quantification, rather than first-order quantification and a truth predicate. The proponent of such an alternative approach denies that the formal analogues of (13) and (14) are

(15) $(\forall x)$ (x = what Susan just said $\rightarrow$ x is true)

and

(16) $(\forall x)$ (Susan says $x \rightarrow x$ is true)

respectively. On the contrary, our objector claims that the variables are *propositional* rather than individual, and so argues that (13) and (14) should be parsed, respectively, as

(17) $(\forall p)$ (p = what Susan just said $\rightarrow p$)

and

(18) $(\forall p)$ Susan says that $p \rightarrow p$).

Evidently, if such an appeal to propositional quantification is successful, our argument for truth's being a property is unsound. A truth predicate is conspicuous by its absence in (17) and (18); so, if (13) and (14) really are represented by (17) and (18), it follows that there is no good reason to treat 'is true' as predicative, and hence truth as a property.

This rejoinder, however, only prompts the question of how (17) and (18) are supposed to be understood. If the propositional quantification is objectual (if, that is, the quantification is into singular term-place), then the variables are syntactically like singular terms: they range over propositions, keeping a place for expressions which refer to such entities. And if this is how the quantification is interpreted, it follows that the variables in (17) and (18) are nothing more than notational variants of those in (15) and (16), which can only mean that both (17) and (18) are ill-formed. On the objectual interpretation, both (17) and (18) contain a lone bound objectual variable to the right of the sentence connective '$\rightarrow$', something which must be coupled with a predicate (presumably, 'is true') in order to be of the right grammatical kind to follow a connective. This much is illustrated by translating back into

English. Since the objectual quantificational variables of formal languages play the role of pronouns in natural languages, they must be given a pronominal reading, and hence (18), for example, must be read as

(19) For any proposition, if Susan says *it*, then *it*,

which is plainly ungrammatical.

A further reason why our objector would be ill-advised to read the quantification in (17) and (18) objectually is that it undercuts one of the most powerful motivations for denying that truth is a property in the first place, namely, that it enables us to avoid ontological commitment to propositions. If (17) and (18) involve quantification over propositions, then they commit us to there being such items: propositions are quantified *over*. Hence, it is no longer true that we are being as metaphysically parsimonious as supporters of the 'no property' view of truth would like.[14] It is also a short step from recognizing that propositions exist to taking truth to be a property of such things.

Given that the propositional quantification cannot be objectual, it may be tempting for the proponent of the 'no property view' to interpret the quantifiers and variables substitutionally. According to such a reading, (18) is paraphrased as 'every substitution instance of "Susan says that $p \rightarrow p$" is true'; while '$(\exists x)$ (Fx)' is paraphrased as 'at least one substitution instance of "Fx" is true'. But this will not help our objector either. First, as Strawson has argued (1974, pp. 66–7), substitutional readings, whether the quantification is first- or second-order, are too metalinguistic to be plausible explanations of the meanings of our quantified statements. The meaning of, for example,

(14) Whatever Susan says is true

could not be clearer: it is given by the words. As Strawson himself puts it, '[a]ny paraphrase . . . which mentions expressions is a poor one' (1974, p. 67). Second, the substitutional readings themselves presume that truth is a property: to repeat, (18) means 'every substitution instance of "Susan says that $p \rightarrow p$" is true is *true*'. The substitutional interpretation of the quantifiers is thus inconsistent with the 'no property' view of truth.

It might be supposed that this concludes the case against the 'no property' view. The holder of this view seeks to explain away the apparent need for a truth predicate in cases such as (13) and (14) by appealing to propositional quantification; so if we have shown that neither an objectual nor a substitutional reading of the quantifiers is compatible with a denial that 'is true' is a predicate, have we not shown that the

appeal to propositional quantification is useless? Not yet. For it has been argued, notably by Prior (1971), that the propositional quantification in (17) and (18) is neither objectual nor substitutional. Prior approaches this conclusion by first of all distinguishing two senses of 'what a variable stands for' (1971, p. 35). In the first sense, a variable stands for the expression it keeps a place for: in the case of objectual quantification, a singular term. In the second sense, a variable stands for what would be referred to by an expression of the sort for which it keeps a place: individual objects, when the quantification is objectual. But once this distinction has been made, Prior regards it as plain that, in the case of propositional quantification, '[t]he variables here stand for, i.e. keep places for, sentences, but since it is not the job of sentences to designate objects, there is just no question what objects these variables stand for in the second sense' (1971, p. 35). In other words, because propositional quantification is quantification into *sentence*-position, and because sentences do not name anything, it follows that the bound variables of propositionally quantified sentences do not range over a class of objects.

Clearly, if Prior is correct, what we have in cases such as (17) and (18) is quantification which cannot be said to be objectual: the bound variables, since they keep place for expressions which do not refer, make no ontological commitment; propositions are not quantified *over*. But neither is the quantification substitutional: the truth conditions of the quantified sentences are not explained in terms of the truth of their substitution instances. However, the interest of such a reading of propositional quantification goes beyond the discovery of a breed of quantification which undermines a trusted dichotomy. Prior's proposal seems to offer a means of rehabilitating the idea that propositional quantification allows us express the things which, so it seems, can only be expressed by means of semantic ascent and a truth predicate. Obviously, if we do not quantify *over* propositions in (17) and (18), there is no residual pressure to think of truth as a property of propositions. But more than this, it looks as though Prior's understanding of propositional quantification enables him to form a reply to the suggestion that (17) and (18) are ill-formed. The reply goes as follows.

The objection that the final occurrences of the bound variables in (17) and (18) require completion by a predicate, and hence that (17) and (18) are both ill-formed, rests on the assumption that propositional quantification is quantification into singular term-place, its variables being *name* variables: variables which keep place for expressions naming propositions. But if, as Prior believes, such quantification is genuinely

into sentence-position, then the variables are truly sentential, and hence the objection crumbles. If Prior is right, what follows the occurrence of '→' in (17), for example, is a variable which is syntactically akin to a sentence rather than a singular term. Consequently, what stands to the right-hand side of the '→' in (17) and (18) does not require completion by a predicate; the variable itself, by virtue of being sentential, already has a predicative aspect. Consequently, Prior denies that the variables in (17) and (18) should be rendered into idiomatic English by pronouns, and hence repudiates the idea that (18), for example, should be paraphrased as (19). In order to give idiomatic readings which do not wrongly give the impression that the quantification is into name-position, Prior thinks we need to use expressions which stand in for sentences as pronouns stand in for names. In other words, Prior believes that the variables should be read *prosententially*.

However, I think Strawson is right in believing that 'the balance of realism tips against Prior and in favour of the view that propositional quantification is quantification over propositions' (1974, p. 79). That is to say, the nature of our language suggests that we may as well represent

(14) Whatever Susan says is true

as

(16) $(\forall x)$ (Susan says $x \rightarrow x$ is true)

in order to demonstrate that the quantification is into name-place rather than sentence-place. There are two reasons for this. First, Prior's claim that we genuinely quantify into sentence-position requires that his account of propositional attitude-ascriptions is acceptable. The variables in

(18) $(\forall p)$ (Susan says that $p \rightarrow p$)

can only be sentential, as opposed to referential, if 'Susan says that' functions in the way Prior claims: as a sentence-forming operator. But as we saw in §2 above, the best available account of the logical form of propositional attitude-ascriptions is not Prior's but an emendation of Davidson's: an account according to which propositions are *named* by a demonstrative 'that'. The quantification in (18) thus seems to be into singular term-position: quantification *over* propositions. In which case, of course, the second occurrence of '*p*' has to be completed by the predicate 'is true'.

The second reason why our language seems to involve no quantification into sentence-position is that it appears to be bereft of prosentences.

Prior's suggestion is that we 'simply *concoct*' (1971, p. 37) the needed expressions. We can introduce the prosentence 'thether', together with the quantifiers 'anywhether' and 'somewhether' (in place of objectual-sounding locutions such as 'for any proposition'), and thus come up with the following idiomatic reading of (18):

(20) If anywhether is said by Susan, then thether.

Similar moves are made by Dorothy Grover, Joseph Camp and Nuel Belnap (1975), who introduce the prosentence 'thatt' in place of Prior's 'thether', and who also regard Prior's new expressions for the quantifiers as useful (1975, p. 87). But introducing such extensions to English does nothing to make the case for *English itself* being a language in which Priorese quantification takes place. In fact, it simply illustrates the fact that our language is not like this at all. What the defender of the prosentential reading of the propositional quantifiers must do is argue that quantification into sentence-position genuinely takes place in English.

It is at this point that the *prosentential theory of truth* (as opposed to a mere prosentential interpretation of the quantifiers and variables) enters the scene. According to Grover *et al.*, 'it is true' and 'that is true' are *themselves* prosentences to be found in English. The words 'is true' do not form a predicate; they function at the level of the object language, merely serving as a syncategorematic part of the prosentences in question. It is thus argued that (18) may be glossed as

(21) For each proposition, if Susan says that it-is-true, then it-is-true,

the hyphens embodying the claim that 'it is true' is an unstructured prosentence.[15]

But this account of 'it is true' and 'that is true' is extremely implausible. There are many locutions of the form 'that is *F*' in which 'that' undeniably refers to a proposition which 'is *F*' describes. Suppose, for example, that Susan asserts the principle of bivalence, and Eleanor replies by saying 'that is entailed by the equivalence thesis'. Given that it is *propositions* which may enter into entailment relations, one can hardly hold back from saying that, in this case, the demonstrative 'that' names a proposition. And if this is so, why should we not treat another possible response of Eleanor's to Susan's assertion – namely, 'that is true' – in the same way?

In reply to this kind of objection, the strategy of Grover *et al.* is to argue that when locutions of the form 'that is *F*' genuinely contain a demonstrative, this demonstrative refers to something other than a proposition.

Considering locutions such as 'that's surprising, but it's true' and 'that's profound, but it's true', here is what they say:

> . . . it simply isn't true that the pronouns in 'That's surprising' and 'That's profound' refer to statements in the what-is-stated, or 'propositional content' sense of statement. What kind of thing is surprising? Facts, presumably, or events or states of affairs. (1975, p. 102)

The response, then, is clear. The demonstrative in 'that is surprising' does not refer to a proposition; it refers to a fact. So the argument by analogy from this case to the conclusion that the demonstrative in 'that is true' names a proposition proceeds from a false premise.

But there are three reasons why this will not do. First, as Forbes has noted (1986, pp. 51–2), Grover *et al.* only deal with less problematic versions of the objection. The case for 'that' naming something other than a proposition is easier to make for 'that is surprising' than in my example. Second, as we shall see in Chapter 4, a fact is nothing but a proposition (that is, a neo-Fregean thought) which is true. Consequently, the thing which is surprising *is*, ultimately, a proposition. Third, even if Grover *et al. can* make a case for the demonstrative 'that' in 'that is surprising' naming something other than a proposition, this does not deal with the objection at its most basic level. Here is why.

At bottom, the objection we are considering is that it is counter-intuitive to regard 'that is true' as an unstructured prosentence. It is more natural to suppose it to be of a kind with other locutions of the form 'that is *F*': sentences composed of a demonstrative and a predicate. Let us now grant that the demonstrative in 'that is surprising' refers to a fact (and not to a proposition). This observation cannot help the prosententialist make her position seem more plausible, for her claim, remember, is that 'that is true' is *unstructured*. Pointing out that other locutions of the form 'that is *F*' *are* composed of a singular term and a predicate cannot possibly help to defend the prosententialist's thesis. Rather than appealing to evidence which lends weight to the idea that 'that is true' is unstructured, Grover *et al.* have merely drawn our attention to yet another structured locution of the form 'that is *F*', and this would seem to increase the pressure on us to regard 'that is true' as structured too. The crucial point is this: once it is admitted that 'that is surprising' contains a referring expression, this case cannot dissuade us from regarding the 'that' in 'that is true' in the same way. And at this point, the prosentential theory is doomed. For once it is supposed that 'that is true' contains a demonstrative, what else could the demonstrative

name but something serving as a vehicle of truth? And, as we shall see in the next section, if there *are* such things as vehicles of truth, propositions seems best placed to act as them.

Ultimately, what Grover *et al.* have to say about 'that is surprising' can only detract from their case. For the objector need only draw an analogy concerning the *structure* of 'that is true' and locutions such as 'that is surprising' and 'that is profound'; the analogy need not extend to the type of entity named by 'that'. Once the analogy concerning structure has been made, the move towards taking the demonstrative in 'that is true' to name a proposition is pretty much inevitable.

For this reason, in order to thwart the objection, prosententialists cannot simply dispute that the demonstrative in 'that is surprising' names something which can also be a bearer of truth. They must either give examples of locutions of the form 'that is *F*' which are *un*structured, and make a case for 'that is true' being akin to such examples; or they must explain why, among locutions of the form 'that is *F*', it is 'that is true' which alone does not comprise a separable name and predicate.[16] They have singularly failed to do either.

This failure puts the final nail in the coffin of the idea that the quantifiers and variables in (17) and (18) may be interpreted prosententially; which, in turn, means that the formulae in question are ill-formed after all. There is thus no option but to accept that the making of indirect, or compendious, endorsements of assertions requires us to make use of a genuine truth-*predicate*. And if 'is true' is a genuine predicate, truth is a genuine property.

3.3 Once it is accepted that truth is a property, there is little to hold us back from saying that truth is a property of *propositions*. On this matter, Horwich is quite right (1990, p. 17). Ordinary language suggests that it is *things people say*, or believe or assert, that are true or false, whilst the alternative candidates have obvious drawbacks. Sentence-types are unpromising candidates to be vehicles of truth because the same sentence-type can be used to say things which vary in truth-value depending on the context of utterance. Utterances, meanwhile, are normally construed as being *conveyers* of truths, things which express truths, rather than truths themselves. Finally, although we may apply 'is true' to beliefs and statements, 'what we have in mind is that the propositional objects of these linguistic and mental acts are true, and not the acts themselves' (Horwich 1990, p. 17).

At this point, however, one might have the following worry. In supposing truth to be a property of propositions, we can clearly account for

the apparently predicative occurrences of 'is true': we will say that the expression wears its function on its sleeve. But what of the apparently operative use of 'is true' in sentences of the form 'it is true that *p*'? Do we not have to give a distinct theory of the truth-*operator*? Thankfully, not. Indeed, we shall see that a consideration of apparently operative occurrences of 'is true', far from creating a problem for the view of truth as a property of propositions, actually serves to strengthen our case.

The issue confronting us is that of how to represent the logical form of a sentence such as

(22) It is true that Julian is unreliable,

a sentence in which one might suppose 'is true' to be functioning as a part of an 'it is true that' operator. But, as I shall now explain, we need not take this view of the function of 'is true' in (22).

Ideally, what we are looking for is an account of (22) which assimilates the apparently operative occurrences of 'is true' to the predicative uses which we have come to regard as basic. To this end, Horwich's suggestion is that we construe (22) 'as an application of the truth *predicate* to the thing which the initial "It" refers, which is supplied by the subsequent noun phrase, "that p"' (ibid., p. 17). But although this is along the right lines, its commitment to treating 'that'-clauses as referring-expressions is problematic. For, as Davidson has argued (1996, pp. 273–4; 1997, pp. 7–8), it is quite mysterious how a compositional, truth-theoretic semantics can accommodate a referring-expression such as 'that Julian is unreliable'.

Presumably, if the 'that'-clause is a referring-expression, 'that . . . ' is supposed to function as a propositional term-forming sentential operator: something which takes a sentence to form a name of the proposition the sentence expresses. But the question is this: how is the reference of the 'that'-clause determined by the operator and the sentence operated upon? The answer can only be this: 'that' is a functional expression which maps whatever the sentence refers to onto a proposition; and, hence, the sentence must, when embedded in a 'that'-clause, refer to some entity (Davidson 1997, p. 8). But what can this entity be? It cannot be the sentence's truth-value: if it were, then all embeddings of true sentences within 'that'-clauses would name the same thing. (If the function and object are the same, the function's value cannot differ.) Consequently, the only option would seem to be that of regarding 'Julian is unreliable', when part of a 'that'-clause, as the semantically unstructured name of the proposition it expresses. This, however, has disastrous consequences. First, the sentence has to be understood as

changing its semantics when following 'that': when functioning as a sentence, the sentence's constituents have their customary semantic features, but when part of a 'that'-clause, the sentence is an unstructured name of a proposition. Second, the suggestion that sentences *ever* function as semantically unstructured expressions commits us to our language's having an infinite primitive vocabulary. Neither consequence can be accepted by a serious semantics. If we are to incorporate a propositional term-forming sentential operator within a truth-theoretic, compositional semantics, there must be an account of how the reference of the 'that'-clause is determined systematically by the functional expression together with the semantic features of the inserted sentence. And it is precisely this that is unavailable to us.[17]

Two conclusions can be drawn at this stage. First, a consideration of the supposed semantics of 'that'-clauses has only strengthened the case for our emended Davidsonian account of the logical form of attitude-ascriptions. Our account, unlike the standard Fregean account, works precisely by analyzing out phrases of the form 'that *p*', and hence avoids Davidson's animadversions concerning such phrases. Second, we need some way of assigning a predicative function to 'is true' in (22) without treating the referring-expression in the sentence as the complete 'that'-clause. And it is at this point that Davidson himself comes to our aid. For the obvious move is to follow Davidson (1969, p. 52) in applying the paratactic apparatus to *any* sentence containing a seeming-'that'-clause. This way, we can simply analyze away the 'that'-clause in (22) and represent its logical form as

(23) True (that). Julian is unreliable.

That is to say, we may take an utterance of (22) to be the utterance of two sentences, the content-sentence and 'that is true', in which 'that' functions as a demonstrative picking out the thing which is claimed to be true and in which 'is true' functions predicatively.[18]

This paratactic approach enables us to view 'is true' in (22) as predicative while taking note of Davidson's concern about the semantics of 'that'-clauses. But, in the light of our earlier discussion of Davidson's paratactic account of indirect discourse, we can go a little further. For, given that our emendation of Davidson's account of indirect discourse requires us to regard the demonstrative 'that' as naming a proposition, and not, as Davidson thought, an utterance, it is wholly natural to regard the demonstrative in (23) as picking out a proposition as well. A unified account of the reference of the demonstrative 'that' in an apparent 'that'-clause is surely a *desideratum*. As Davidson himself puts

it, '[l]anguage is the instrument it is because the same expression, with semantic features (meaning) unchanged, can serve countless purposes' (1968, p. 108); and this applies to the demonstrative 'that' in a seeming 'that'-clause as much as to any other expression. But if this is right, and the demonstrative 'that' in (23) names the proposition expressed by the content-sentence, it follows that the thing which is apt for truth is a proposition. Our neo-Davidsonian account of 'that'-clauses supports the idea that truth is a property of propositions.

This being so, we have another reason for taking propositions to exist, besides the fact that our preferred account of propositional attitude-ascriptions commits us to them. Of course, the move from truth's being a property to its being a property of propositions rests, in part, upon a decision to conform to our ordinary way of speaking about truth and the vehicles of truth. We could always decide to revise our everyday talk, if there were no available satisfactory account of the nature of propositions. Likewise, we could regard our emendation of Davidson's account of propositional attitude-ascriptions as revisable as long as we were still awaiting an account of what propositions are supposed to be like. But we do not have to wait too long. Only until the end of the next chapter, in fact. The provisional conclusion that propositions exist is rendered permanent once propositions are explicated along the neo-Fregean lines I recommend.

Notes

1. Only roughly because my account of thoughts is not true to Frege's own words in every respect. Specifically, I dispute the need to regard thoughts as self-subsistent occupants of a 'third realm' distinct from both the physical universe and the psychological realm (Frege 1918, p. 45). In Chapter 3, §5.2, we shall see that we can grant Frege the objectivity he (rightly) craves without turning thoughts into objects conceptually independent from language-use.
2. For Davidson, then, *things said* are utterances. An appreciation of this is enough to reveal that Horwich's version of the argument from the logical form of propositional attitude attributions to the existence of propositions (1990, pp. 89–93) is inadequate. Horwich's claim is that in order for the inference from

   (1) Lois Lane said that Superman can fly

   to

   (3) There is something Lois Lane said

to go through, we must take (1) to contain a singular term referring to the thing Lois putatively said: the proposition. But Horwich gives no reason why this thing said should be regarded as a proposition rather than, as Davidson believes, an utterance. Horwich makes the mistake here of mindlessly equating the *dummy* category of *things said* with one kind of proposal as to their nature.

3. The principle states that if an expression in a sentence is replaced with another expression with the same reference, the sentence cannot change its truth-value.
4. This principle states that words which are used to specify what someone has said (or, more generally, the contents of propositional attitudes) mean and refer to what they ordinarily mean and refer to. The phrase 'pre-Fregean semantic innocence' comes from Davidson (1968, p. 108).
5. Of course, not any true truth-theory for a language will serve as a theory of meaning for that language. As John McDowell accepts, 'we could exploit the extensionality of truth-theories to derive a new, equally true theory of truth which, in spite of its truth, would not be serviceable in yielding content-specifications, and so would not serve as a theory of sense' (1977, p. 113). But this does not undermine the truth-theoretic project. For no one pursuing this project denies that further constraints need to placed upon a true theory of truth for a language, if it is to serve as that language's theory of meaning. Among all the true theories of truth for a language, the one which can serve as a theory of sense is that which is *interpretational*: that which yields content-specifications which make sense of language-users. McDowell puts this point nicely. 'The thesis, should be', he says, 'not that sense is what a theory of truth is a theory of, but rather that truth is what a theory of sense is a theory of' (1976, p. 8).
6. As is the case with many other obvious truths, this has been denied by some philosophers. (See, for example, Salmon 1986.) I shall argue that such a denial cannot be made good in Chapter 3 below.
7. I use double angled brackets to denote sequences.
8. McDowell (1980, p. 219) notes, with obvious approval, Geach's claim that the German word 'ja' (meaning *yes*) and the Polish word 'ja' (meaning *I*) are different words.
9. Not the same Fregean sense, for familiar reasons to do with indexical expressions. For example, if two distinct people use the same word 'I', its linguistic meaning remains constant, but, because sense determines reference, we must say that different senses are expressed.
10. Rumfitt (1993, pp. 447–8) offers a similar argument against McFetridge.
11. Richard Holton (1996) denies that a solution to the counting problem must commit us ontologically to propositions. I reply to Holton in my 1996a.
12. It might be objected that someone could know which proposition was demonstrated merely by thinking of it as 'the proposition expressed by "Superman can fly"'. Obviously, if this were right, then my proposal would be prone to a version of Schiffer's objection to Davidson's theory. It is my contention, however, that a clear grasp of what it is to understand singular terms which refer to abstract objects undermines the thought that my proposal is vulnerable to Schiffer's objection. As Gareth Evans (1982, ch. 4) has noted, a speaker cannot succeed in understanding a singular term unless she

has *discriminating knowledge* of its referent: she must have the capacity to distinguish the object referred to from all other things. Let us now ask what form such knowledge would have to take in the case of a demonstrative referring to a proposition. Someone who knew of <Superman can fly> merely under the description 'the proposition expressed by "Superman can fly"' would not have such discriminating knowledge. She would not have the capacity to distinguish the proposition in question from other propositions. (If you are tempted to dispute this, imagine that the words 'Superman can fly' expressed a different proposition; our thinker would use the same description to refer to a proposition which was in fact different.)

Evans's own suggestion is that singular terms of abstract objects are typically such that understanding them requires the thinker to have a *fundamental idea* (1982, p. 107, note 30) of the referent (where one possesses a fundamental idea of a referent if one knows what differentiates it from other objects). Knowing only that the proposition in question is expressed by 'Superman can fly' does not yield a fundamental idea of it: the same proposition could have been expressed by different words. At least part of the fundamental idea of the proposition that Superman can fly must be that it has the truth conditions that it has. And granted that this is correct, one can know which proposition is demonstrated only if one knows its content.

13. It might be questioned whether an abstract object – a proposition – may be demonstrated by means of the 'that' of an attitude report. This worry is defused in Chapter 3, §5.3, once I have offered my preferred account of the ontological nature of propositions.
14. This point is well made by Robert Brandom (1988, p. 87).
15. Grover *et al.* in fact couple a prosentential reading of the variables with a substitutional interpretation of the quantifiers (1975, p. 110). Presumably, this is to avoid any ontological commitment to truthbearers, although, as we have seen, Prior achieves the same effect without giving the quantifiers a substitutional reading. Prior's approach would seem to be preferable for prosententialists, given the misgivings about substitutional quantification expressed above.
16. Grover appears recently to have accepted that 'that' in 'that is true' may function as a referring-expression. In Grover 1992, p. 20 she says

> I now think 'that' in 'That is true' may sometimes be construed as an independently referring pronoun that picks out the antecedent of the prosentence . . . [i]n figuring out what is said, we must distinguish between the grammatical subject term 'that' and the logical subject of 'That is true'. The grammatical subject term is 'that' and it locates the antecedent [sentence]; the logical subject derives from the logical subject of the antecedent, and there can be complications. On this analysis, 'true' and 'false' are a sign that prosentential anaphora are being employed – the sign that, e.g., 'that is true' and 'John's last claim are true' are inheritors that inherit their content from antecedent sentences.

This retreat marks the end of the prosentential theory as a distinct theory. For if 'that' in 'that is true' is an independently referring demonstrative which picks out a sentence, 'is true' is a predicate. The claim that 'is true' none the less functions at the level of the object language (by inheriting its

logical subject from its antecedent sentence) is a bizarre one. It is unclear how semantic ascent can be avoided if 'that' refers to a sentence. The distinctive claim of the prosentential theory is that 'that is true' is an unstructured prosentence; but to be a prosentence, and hence to be an object language expression, 'that' must not be an independently referring pronoun.

17. Davidson's concern that expressions of the form 'that *p*' are not in good order lies at the root of his rejection of Horwich's minimalism. As we shall see in Chapter 6, §7 below, the sort of paratactic account of 'that'-clauses I recommend gives the minimalist a neat way of replying to Davidson.
18. According to the paratactic account being suggested, 'it' appears in (22) because of the grammatical (not logical) need to provide the sentence with something of the grammatical form of a singular term. It does not show up in a representation of logical form.

3

The Nature of Propositions: Thoughts versus States of Affairs

1. Introduction

The conclusion of the previous chapter was that propositions exist. The present chapter addresses the question of their nature. Just what sort of thing is the proposition denoted by the demonstrative 'that' of an attitude-ascription? Two rival conceptions of the nature of propositions have been particularly influential in analytical philosophy. Proponents of the respective accounts agree that propositions are abstract, structured entities which exist before they are grasped by anyone or first put into words, but differ when it comes to the question of their constituents.

According to the kind of view associated with Russell, a proposition 'contains the entities indicated by the words' (1903, p. 51). In other words, the constituents of a proposition are the entities the proposition is about: entities from the *realm of reference*.[1] Hence, for Russell, <Mont Blanc is more than 4000 metres high> contains as constituents the mountain itself together with the property of being more than 4000 metres high (Russell 1904a, p. 57). We are, of course, already acquainted with such items by another name. The true Russellian proposition that Mont Blanc is more than 4000 metres high can be no different to what a correspondence theorist would think of as the *state of affairs* which is supposed to act as its truthmaker: both consist of the mountain's instantiating the property. In Chapter 1, we saw that we need not introduce such things to act as truthmakers. If Russell is right about the nature of propositions, states of affairs none the less exist; it is just that they play a different role: that of *vehicles*, as opposed to *makers*, of truth.[2]

So much for the Russellian account of propositions. By contrast, Fregeans take propositions to contain, not the entities they are about, but entities from the *realm of sense*: ways of thinking of the things the proposition is about (Frege 1918). On this alternative picture, the proposition expressed by a sentence is a complex of the senses of the sentence's component expressions. If Frege is correct, a proposition concerning Mont Blanc contains as a constituent, not Mont Blanc, but the sense of the name 'Mont Blanc': the way in which we must think of the mountain in order to understand the name (Frege 1904a, p. 56).

We can put the question addressed in the present chapter like this: are propositions states of affairs (as Russell thinks) or thoughts (as Frege believes)? My answer is that they are thoughts. In §§3 and 4 I give arguments for preferring the Fregean construal of propositions, before, in §5, defending an ontology of thoughts against objections. But first of all I shall say a little more about the constituents of thoughts: senses.

2. Senses introduced

2.1 Frege's thesis that sentence-constituents express a sense, in addition to having a referent, is his response to the puzzle of how a true identity-sentence can be informative (Frege 1892, pp. 23–4). If we compare the following two sentences

(1) Clark Kent is Clark Kent

and

(2) Clark Kent is Superman,

we notice at once that while one cannot understand (1) without knowing that it is true, the truth of (2) is something that can be genuinely *discovered*. However, if we make the pre-Fregean assumption that names serve solely to refer to things in the world, we are unable to explain how (2) can convey a different piece of information to (1). The only difference between (1) and (2) is that the latter sees an occurrence of 'Clark Kent' replaced by an occurrence of the co-referring 'Superman'; hence, if the content of a sentence is determined merely by the referents of its constituent expressions and their manner of combination, (1) and (2) cannot differ in content. They must express the same proposition. So, given that one only needs to understand (1) in order to know that it is true, the pre-Fregean has no choice but to say that the same must go for (2).

Of course, the conclusion that (2) is no more informative than (1) looks like a compelling *reductio* of the thesis that names serve solely to

denote objects. And it is for this reason that Frege introduced the notion of *sense*, claiming that co-referring names may none the less express different senses: different *modes of presentation* of the same referent (ibid., p. 24). The idea here is that although 'Clark Kent' and 'Superman' refer to the same thing, to understand one of the names is not to understand the other. Understanding 'Superman' requires one to think about its referent in a different way to that way of thinking constitutive of understanding 'Clark Kent'. Now, if the senses of names enter into the contents of sentences, we have an answer to the question of how (2) may differ in content to (1): 'Clark Kent' and 'Superman' express different senses, and so the contents expressed by (1) and (2) must differ.

The puzzle, and Frege's solution to it, can be generalized in two ways. First, the puzzle does not essentially concern identity-sentences. At root, the phenomenon which concerns us is that sentences may be built up in the same way out of words with the same referents and yet say different things. (1) and (2) provide us with one such example: we want to say that (1) and (2) say different things because someone (Lois Lane, for example) could understand both sentences, be quite rational, and yet believe (1) to be true and (2) to be false. But another example of the same phenomenon is provided by

(3) Superman can fly

and

(4) Clark Kent can fly.

Here too, someone could understand both sentences and yet take them to have different truth-values; and so, once more, it is compelling to take this indicate that there is a difference in content between (3) and (4) for which the pre-Fregean cannot allow.

Second, Frege's puzzle is not restricted to the case of proper names. The pair of sentences

(5) Clark Kent is a human being

and

(6) Clark Kent is a member of the species *homo sapiens*

differ in content because they present the same property in different ways. Recognising this, we are free to regard all types of expression as having both a reference and a sense, and hence free to see the proposition expressed by a sentence as a *thought*: a complex of the senses expressed by the sentence's constituent expressions.

2.2 So far we have the barest outlines of a theory of sense. We need to know a little more before we can begin to assess the claim that propositions have senses as constituents. I shall start by focusing on the sense of a proper name.

There are two constraints that must be met by a satisfactory theory of sense. First, and obviously, it must allow for a distinction to be made between a name's sense and its referent: only then can the puzzle be solved. Second, given that the sense of a name is what must be grasped in order to understand it, and given further that the possibility of communication seems to demand that we all understand our words in the same way, it follows that the sense of a name must not be idiosyncratic. We must be able to talk of *the* sense of a name: something which is 'grasped by everybody who is sufficiently familiar with the language' (Frege 1892, p. 24); something 'which may be the common property of many and therefore is not a part of a mode of the individual mind' (ibid., p. 26).

Famously (or, perhaps, infamously), Frege has trouble reconciling this second constraint with some of the other things he wants to say about senses. In particular, seemingly carried away by both the *mode of presentation* metaphor and by the idea that modes of presentation are specifiable by means of definite descriptions, Frege comes to the conclusion that the same name may present the same referent differently to different people. Remarking on the name 'Aristotle', Frege says that

> opinions as to the sense may differ. It might, for instance, be taken to be the following: the pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. Anybody who does this will attach another sense to the sentence 'Aristotle was born in Stagira' than will a man who takes as the sense of the name: the teacher of Alexander the Great who was born in Stagira (1892, p. 24).

Once the descriptive conception puts its spin upon the claim that the sense of a name presents its referent in a certain way, intersubjective variation of sense seems inevitable.

How is it possible to satisfy both conditions of adequacy? How, that is, can we solve the puzzle while relieving the perceived tension between the *mode of presentation* metaphor and the demand that senses not proliferate? The solution, I believe, lies in a conception of the sense of a proper name suggested by McDowell (1977). According to McDowell, to grasp the sense of the name 'Clark Kent' is to know a *truth*: namely, that 'Clark Kent' refers to Clark Kent: knowledge which is manifested in the

ability to use the name properly and respond intelligently to its use by others. Knowledge of sense is simply knowledge of its reference. Having said this, two potential misunderstandings should be laid to rest at once. First of all, knowing that 'Clark Kent' refers to Clark Kent (that is, grasping the name's sense) is to be contrasted with merely being acquainted with the name's referent: one could be acquainted with Clark Kent but not know that he is the bearer of the name 'Clark Kent' (if, for example, one only saw him when dressed up in his Superman outfit). The distinction between sense and reference, on McDowell's view, corresponds to the (non-Fregean) distinction between refer*ence* and refer*ent* (1977, p. 115). Second, we should not conflate someone's knowing the sense of 'Clark Kent' with their knowing merely that 'Clark Kent' is a name and being able to drop quotation marks (ibid., p. 121). Obviously, one could know that 'Clark Kent' is a name, and know how to take a name out of quotation marks, without knowing which object was the name's bearer: without, that is, being able to use the name properly.

This thin or 'austere' account of sense (ibid., p. 121) is sufficiently robust to enable us to distinguish sense from reference, and hence to give us the resources to solve Frege's puzzle (ibid., pp. 116–17). To see this, let us first of all set out the clauses which give the senses of the names 'Clark Kent' and 'Superman':

(7) 'Clark Kent' refers to Clark Kent.
(8) 'Superman' refers to Superman.

The puzzle, remember, is how someone can understand

(2) Clark Kent is Superman

without thereby knowing that it is true. Here is the answer. One can know both the truth expressed by (7) and that expressed by (8) without knowing either the truth expressed by

(9) 'Clark Kent' refers to Superman

or that expressed by

(10) 'Superman' refers to Clark Kent.

Given that this is so, one can understand both of the names in (2) and yet not know that they refer to the same thing. And this means that one can understand (2) without automatically knowing that it is true.

The austere account of the sense of a proper name also enables us to avoid the damaging conclusion that sense is idiosyncratic. The slippage

towards this conclusion is the result of reading too much in to the *mode of presentation* metaphor. It is tempting to suppose, for example, that when the name 'Clark Kent' is used by Lois Lane, Clark Kent is presented to her in a different way to that in which he is presented to, say, his mother when she uses the name. And one may try to cash out this supposed difference along the following lines: Clark Kent's mother thinks of him as, perhaps, *my loving son*, while Lois thinks of him as, say, *the bespectacled reporter at the next desk*. This troublesome conclusion is avoided by the austere account. While it is, no doubt, true that in order to grasp the sense of a name, one must have some beliefs about its bearer, it is a mistake to think that understanding a name requires one to know that the bearer alone satisfies some definite description. There are two reasons for this. First, such a thesis is an insistence on more than what usually suffices (ibid., p. 118). Second, it rests upon a confusion concerning the role of a theory of sense. To give a name's sense is to specify *what must be known* by someone who understands the name. And what must be known, if one is to count as understanding the name 'Clark Kent', is that 'Clark Kent' denotes Clark Kent. Clark Kent is the man one should have in mind when one uses the name. The claim that *how* one comes to single out Clark Kent should be constitutive of the sense one attaches to the name is a *non sequitur*. It is to conflate *what is understood* (that is, the ability possessed) by someone who understands the name with *how one comes to determine* an object as the name's bearer (how one comes to have the ability in question). The latter may vary from person to person; the former, the name's sense, does not.

In saying this, we do not repudiate the idea that a name expresses a *mode of presentation* of the name's referent. The names 'Clark Kent' and 'Superman' present the same referent in different ways all right; but all this means is that the former presents the object *as Clark Kent* while the latter presents it *as Superman*. As McDowell himself says,

> this metaphor of manners of presentation can be interpreted in the context of the austere conception. Difference in sense between ['Clark Kent' and 'Superman'] lies in the fact that the clauses in the theory of sense which specify the object presented by the names are constrained to present it in the ways in which the respective names present it. They meet this constraint – surely infallibly – by actually using the respective names. (ibid., p. 121)

In other words, the two names express different ways of thinking about the same referent, but this need give no comfort to the proponent of

the descriptive conception of the sense of a proper name. Although people may differ in the beliefs that they have about the referent of 'Clark Kent', they none the less grasp the same sense when they respectively understand a use of the name. They both know that 'Clark Kent' picks out Clark Kent.

We can thus solve Frege's puzzle by introducing the notion of the sense of a proper name, and yet avoid any commitment to sense being idiosyncratic. And this moral seems generalizable to the senses of all categories of expression. Correspondingly austere theories of the senses of other expressions are easy to formulate. In the case of predicates, for example, the different senses of 'is a human being' and 'is a member of the species *homo sapiens*' will be displayed by the following clauses:

(11) An object *o* satisfies 'is a human being' if and only if *o* is a human being.
(12) An object *o* satisfies 'is a member of the species *homo sapiens*' if and only if *o* is a member of the species *homo sapiens*.

Clearly, one can grasp the respective truths expressed by (11) and (12) without knowing that to be a human being is to be a member of the species *homo sapiens*, and so we have a ready solution to Frege's puzzle as applied to predicates. And yet if (11) and (12) give the senses of the two predicates, it is clear once more that there is no problem of proliferation.

So far, so good. But the question remains: why should we take propositions to have senses, rather than objects and properties, as constituents? Why, that is, should we take the demonstrative 'that' in a propositional attitude-ascription to refer to a thought and not to a Russellian proposition: a state of affairs? There are two arguments for taking the Fregean option. The first is that treating the contents of utterances, and the objects of propositional attitudes, as thoughts enables us to make better sense of the people we interpret. The second is that the Russellian runs into a problem concerning falsehood. The next two sections are dedicated to the elucidation of these two arguments.

3. Making sense of people

3.1 An account of propositions succeeds or fails according to whether it enables propositions to fulfil their theoretical role in our fathoming of people (McDowell 1977, p. 112). It is a familiar point that 'making detailed sense of a person's intentions and beliefs cannot be independent of making sense of his utterances' (Davidson 1974b, p. 144); 'we should think of meanings and beliefs as interrelated constructs of a single

theory' (ibid., p. 146). With the aim of maximizing the intelligibility of the speaker, hypotheses concerning which proposition an utterance expresses are confirmed or rejected according to how they cohere with hypotheses concerning the speaker's state of mind. Likewise, evidence concerning which proposition is expressed by an utterance sheds light on the speaker's propositional attitudes. But if the propositions which people express and take attitudes towards were states of affairs, there would be situations in which people were unfathomable. States of affairs, so it seems, are too coarsely individuated to 'figure in the direct delineation of the contours of thought' (McDowell 1986, p. 142). To see this, we need only return to Metropolis and to the case of Lois and Superman/Clark Kent.

Let us suppose that, due to her ignorance of Superman's true identity, Lois sincerely utters

(3) Superman can fly,

but, with equal sincerity, dissents from a colleague's utterance of

(4) Clark Kent can fly.

How should we describe Lois's psychological economy? One thing is for sure: she is not irrational, merely ignorant of the fact that Clark Kent is Superman. But since this is so, and since Lois assents to (3) but dissents from (4), while understanding both sentences, it seems obvious that Lois believes that Superman can fly but does not believe that Clark Kent can fly. Indeed, this conclusion would appear to be required in order to make sense of Lois. A description of Lois as believing that Clark Kent can fly would not make sense of her denial of (4). It would fail to see its *point*.

This, however, is just the position that the Russellian finds himself in. For he cannot acknowledge that there can be two distinct propositions which involve the same property being predicated of the same object. If propositions are states of affairs, then <Superman can fly> *is* <Clark Kent can fly>. Consequently, if belief is a binary relation between a thinker and a state of affairs, the Russellian has no choice but to say that

(13) Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly

and

(14) Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly

are both true. And on the face of it, this just means that he has failed to fathom why Lois denies (4).

These considerations strongly suggest that propositions must conform to the following principle, if our attitude-ascriptions are to do justice our psychological economy:

(CD) The proposition expressed by '*p*' is distinct from the proposition expressed by '*q*', if it is possible for someone to understand both sentences at a given time while rationally taking different attitudes towards them (i.e. assenting to one while dissenting from, or being agnostic about, the other).[3]

States of affairs are too coarsely grained to conform to this principle, the so-called Fregean 'intuitive criterion of difference'.[4] So our moral can only be that we must slice our propositions finer than the Russellian thinks fit.

Of course, Fregean thoughts fit the bill nicely. If Frege is right, (3) and (4) differ in content because they express thoughts which differ in their respective constituent modes of presentation. For this reason, Lois's assent to (3) but dissent from (4) can be explained in the obvious way: Lois believes the thought expressed by (3), but not that expressed by (4). In other words, Lois believes that Superman can fly but does not believe that Clark Kent can fly.

This, however, is just the opening salvo in the battle. For it has been argued, notably by Nathan Salmon (1986), that the view of the attitudes as binary relations between thinkers and states of affairs is retrievable. According to Salmon it *really is* the case that Lois believes both that Superman can fly and that Clark Kent can fly. However, to make this position palatable, Salmon must do three things: undermine the intuitions which fuel (CD); explain why these errant intuitions have, despite their falsehood, been so compelling; and explain how Lois can come to take conflicting attitudes to sentences which express the same proposition.[5] This third task amounts to explaining why Lois denies (4) if she really believes that Clark Kent can fly.

When it comes to the first task, Salmon's problem lies with the sheer implausibility of his position. As we have noted, our intuitions tell us that Lois believes that Superman can fly but does not believe that Clark Kent can fly. Furthermore, it is intuitive to think that Lois would revise her beliefs, if she were to *discover* that Superman is Clark Kent; but if Salmon is correct, she could no more discover this than discover that Superman is Superman. Somehow Salmon must try to explain away what Schiffer has called 'the patina of counterintuitiveness' (1992, p. 509) attaching to his theory's consequences.

To this end, we can discern the following response: our intuitions concerning substitutivity within propositional attitude-contexts are

based upon an obviously false semantic theory, namely, the description theory of names; hence, our intuitions stand in need of revision.[6] But such an argument is very weak. For one thing, we have seen that a Fregean need not be committed to the view that senses are descriptive. Indeed, one of the *raisons d'être* of the kind of austere account of sense recommended by McDowell is that such a descriptive account be avoided. One may agree with the kinds of argument put forward by Saul Kripke (1980, esp. Lecture II) against the description theory of names without thereby renouncing the thesis that names have a sense in addition to a referent. Besides, Lois would surely be described as believing that Superman can fly, but not that Clark Kent can fly, by people who have never heard of the description theory of names and who hold no semantic theory concerning names whatever. This indicates that a commitment to the description theory of names does not underlie our intuition that co-referring names may not be substituted *salva veritate* in propositional attitude-contexts.

Neither can Salmon discharge the second obligation incumbent upon him, that of explaining why our allegedly false intuitions concerning propositional attitude-contexts have taken root. Salmon's attempt to effect such an explanation appeals to the notion of *conversational implicature* (Salmon 1986, pp. 115–18). It is suggested that

(14) Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly

carries the Gricean implicature that Lois would assent to

(4) Clark Kent can fly;

so although it is strictly and literally true that Lois believes that Clark Kent can fly, we are led to deny it by the fact that the implicated proposition (that Lois assents to (4)) is false. But as Michael Morris makes clear (1992, p. 36), the problem with taking this line is that of explaining how (14) has come to have the implicature claimed. If our ordinary intuitions about belief-attributions are taken for granted, we can understand how this could be so; for these intuitions have us say that since Lois does not assent to (4), (14) is false: she does not believe that Clark Kent can fly. But if our intuitions are, as Salmon believes, mistaken (if, that is, it is really true that Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly) there is no good reason why the presumption that Lois Lane should assent to (4) should have become established. Saying that a sentence carries an implicature is not enough; one must also explain how it came to have it.

Let us now consider whether Salmon can meet his third obligation: explaining how Lois can take conflicting attitudes to two sentences

which express the same proposition. How is it that Lois Lane can be rational, believe

(3) Superman can fly

to be true and

(4) Clark Kent can fly

to be false, and yet both sentences express the same proposition? The one such account available is this: (3) and (4) both express (or, as Salmon would have it, 'decode') the same state of affairs, but under different modes of presentation or *guises* (Salmon 1986, ch. 8). That is to say, the two sentences *present the same Russellian proposition – the same state of affairs – in different ways*. Consequently, Lois assents to (3) but not to (4), not because she believes the proposition expressed by (3) and disbelieves the distinct proposition expressed by (4), but because she fails to realize that the proposition expressed by the two sentences is the same.

More formally, the binary relation of belief is explicated in terms of a ternary relation, *BELIEF*, that holds between a believer *a*, a state of affairs *p* and a guise *g*, such that:

Belief (*a*, *p*) iff (∃ g) (*BELIEF* (*a*, *p*, *g*)).

Lois believes that Clark Kent can fly because, while she does not *BELIEVE* it under the guise presented by (4), she *does BELIEVE* it under the guise presented by (3).

Salmon is forced into introducing guises as a result of his own refusal to countenance senses. But this refusal is poorly motivated. One could understand someone wishing to take the objects of belief to be states of affairs rather than thoughts because they took senses (or modes of presentation) to be dubious entities. (I shall discuss this objection in §5 below.) But if modes of presentation are dubious entities, then so are guises. For guises are nothing more nor less than modes of presentation of states of affairs. Furthermore, there are good methodological reasons for preferring to think of belief as a binary relation between a person and a thought. If *both* the Fregean and the Russellian are admitting modes of presentation into their respective ontologies, then there is nothing left to motivate the claim that the objects of belief are states of affairs rather than thoughts. The Fregean approach is in accord with our intuitions inasmuch as it recognizes that ordinary speakers will describe Lois Lane as believing that Superman can fly but not believing that Clark Kent can fly; while, from the Fregean perspective, it is needlessly complicated to seek to elucidate the binary relation of belief in terms of

a ternary relation holding between a believer, a state of affairs and a guise. Given that the Russellian admits that there are modes of presentation of states of affairs at least, it seems odd to wish to make use of the triadic *BELIEF* relation when one could simply hold belief to be a dyadic relation between people and complexes of modes of presentation.

3.2 Given that our goal in interpretation is that of maximizing intelligibility, the contents of utterances and the objects of propositional attitudes are best construed as thoughts rather than Russellian propositions: states of affairs. This is the conclusion of the first argument for the view of propositions as thoughts. However, Schiffer has proffered two influential objections to this picture, objections which must be attended to, if the argument is to go through. The remainder of this section is devoted to replying to them.

The first of these objections arises in the context of Schiffer's discussion of the so-called 'hidden indexical theory' of the logical form of attitude-ascriptions (Schiffer 1992). While Schiffer assumes that the 'that-clause' in such an ascription refers to a proposition, he rejects what we have been assuming up to now: namely, that verbs of propositional attitude express a *binary* relation holding between a person and a proposition. Schiffer's argument is straightforward. The propositional attitudes can be neither binary relations between persons and states of affairs, nor binary relations between persons and thoughts; and these options exhaust the available candidates to serve as the referents of the relation's supposed second term.[7]

When it comes to the view of propositional attitudes as relations between thinkers and states of affairs, Schiffer agrees that states of affairs are insufficiently fine-grained to serve in descriptions of states of mind. As we saw in §3.1 above, we end up committed to the view that Lois believes both that Superman can fly *and* that Clark Kent can fly, a conclusion which is too counter-intuitive to be acceptable (Schiffer 1992, pp. 508–9). However, when he considers the Fregean suggestion that the attitudes are binary relations relating thinkers and *thoughts* (complexes of senses), Schiffer's objection should set a few alarm bells ringing. For the objection is simply that the proliferation of senses entails that there will be no single thought grasped by everyone who understands a given sentence. If, argues Schiffer, we consider the sentence,

(15) Everyone who has ever known her has believed that Madonna Ewas musical,

the Fregean proposal demands that 'there is a particular mode of presentation *m* of Madonna and a particular mode of presentation *m*'

of the property of being musical such that the foregoing utterance of [(15)] is true only if everyone who has ever known Madonna has believed the proposition <<*m*, *m*′>>' (Schiffer 1992, p. 507). But, Schiffer claims,

> this is surely too strong a requirement on the truth of [(15)]. It requires that everyone who has ever known Madonna shared a single way of thinking of her and a single way of thinking of the property of being musical, and this is most unlikely given that there may have been people who knew her as a child and then died and that someone like Helen Keller may have been among them. (ibid., p. 507)

The solution, according to Schiffer, is to adopt the hidden indexical theory, although this too, Schiffer observes, is faced with problems of its own (ibid., pp. 510–19).[8] According to the hidden indexical theory, the logical form of, say,

(13) Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly

is

(16) $(\exists\, m)\ (\phi^{*}m \wedge B(\text{Lois Lane}, \langle\langle\text{Superman, being able to fly}\rangle\rangle, m))$,

in which reference is made to ϕ^{*}: a type of mode of presentation. This reference is implicit and, crucially, *contextually determined* inasmuch as *different* types of mode of presentation may be referred to on different occasions of utterance (Schiffer 1992, p. 503). This being so, the hidden indexical theory enables us to construe propositions as states of affairs (which, we may note, Schiffer unreflectingly treats as sequences of objects and properties), and yet avoid the counter-intuitive consequences of the view that propositional attitudes are binary relations between thinkers and such things. This it does by treating belief (and any other attitude) as a *ternary* relation between a thinker *x*, a state of affairs *p*, and a *mode of presentation m* under which *x* believes *p*. Whilst Salmon merely appeals to such a ternary relation to shed light on what he continues to regard as the binary relation of belief, and to attempt to explain how

(13) Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly

and

(14) Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly

can both be true, the supporter of the hidden indexical theory takes the attitudes to be *really ternary*. As a result, the hidden indexical theory accords with our intuition that (13) is true but (14) is false. For the hidden indexical theorist, (13) and (14) differ in truth-value for the simple

reason that the type of mode of presentation referred to in (13) differs from that referred to in (14). Furthermore, the proliferation problem supposedly disabling the Fregean account is avoided since the hidden indexical theory allows that (15), for example, is true if each person who has ever known Madonna thought of her as being musical *under some mode of presentation or other* (ibid., p. 508).

But a wholehearted embrace of the hidden indexical theory would be precipitate. For one thing, there still remains a commitment to propositions being states of affairs and, as we shall see in §4 below, it is unclear how such things can be unified without thereby being true. More importantly, however, Schiffer's move towards the hidden indexical theory is unsound since it relies upon a misconceived criticism of the theory that belief (and the other attitudes) are binary relations between thinkers and thoughts. Schiffer's objection to such a Fregean account is simply that the senses of names and predicates will proliferate, and hence that the same sentence may express different thoughts for different people. But, in the light of the discussion of §2.2 above, we can appreciate how inappropriate this objection is. For it trades upon precisely that perceptual reading of the *mode of presentation* metaphor, and consequent over-rich conception of sense, which we have found reason to reject. To return to Schiffer's own example, the sense one associates with the name 'Madonna' is not how Madonna (perceptually) appears to one, and it is not constituted by any of the beliefs one has about Madonna which enable one to pick her out. Knowledge of the sense of 'Madonna' is simply knowledge that 'Madonna' refers to Madonna. For two names to present the same referent in different ways is just for the truth-values of propositional attitude-ascriptions to be sensitive to which name is used. This being so, knowing the sense of 'Madonna', since it involves no more than being able to determine which object is its bearer, is knowledge that can be shared by Helen Keller or any other thinker. Schiffer's objection to treating the attitudes as binary relations between thinkers and thoughts dissolves.

3.3 Schiffer's other objection is supposed by him to be decisive against either conception of propositions. At its most general, it is that a supporter of propositions cannot give an account of propositions about natural kinds. Applied to the view of propositions as thoughts, it is that there is no convincing account of the sense of a natural kind-term (or, to put it another way, no plausible account of what the mode of presentation of a natural kind could be).

To adapt Schiffer's own example, let us suppose that Lois has a pet called 'Gustav', and that she believes that Gustav is a dog. Because

something is a dog if and only if it belongs to the natural kind which is the species *Canis familiaris*, it follows that the sense of 'dog' – the constituent of the thought expressed by the word – must be a mode of presentation of *Canis familiaris*. But Schiffer's question is: what could this mode of presentation be? He rejects, rightly, the idea that it is 'the doggy *Gestalt*' (Schiffer 1987, pp. 69–70). The problem with this proposal is that such a thing could conceivably be the *Gestalt* for both dogs and a species of dog-like non-dogs, thus enabling the intuitive criterion to be violated. To see this, suppose that Lois became aware that both species shared the same *Gestalt*. If this were to happen, it would be possible for Lois to both believe and disbelieve of the one species of dogs – under a single mode of presentation – that they are *F*. For if she can believe that dogs but not dog-like non-dogs are *F*, then she can misidentify dogs as dog-like non-dogs, and so both disbelieve and believe of the species of dogs, under a single mode of presentation, that they are *F*.

The only alternative, according to Schiffer, is for the mode of presentation of the natural kind to be descriptive, the idea here being that Lois Lane believes of the species *Canis familiaris* under a description of the form 'the *F*', that Gustav belongs to it. Quite rightly, Schiffer rejects this too. Leaving aside worries concerning the correctness or otherwise of the description theory of names, a dilemma afflicts any particular proposal concerning the nature of the descriptive mode of presentation: either the description will not be uniquely satisfied by members of the species *Canis familiaris* (in which case Frege's intuitive criterion will be violated for the same reason that the 'doggy *Gestalt*' violates it); or it will be too complex to be plausibly ascribed to ordinary speakers. Lois, for example, could believe that Gustav is a dog while having no conception of the internal properties that causally produce characteristically doggy features, so a description specifying such features could not count as the description under which Lois thinks of *Canis familiaris*.

This, Schiffer believes, exhausts the candidates for the mode of presentation of the species of dogs, and so he concludes, in effect, that Lois Lane's believing that Gustav is a dog cannot be a relation between Lois and a thought. What the Fregean needs, and what Schiffer evidently believes there cannot be, is an account of the sense of 'dog' (that is to say, an account of a mode of presentation of *Canis familiaris*) which meets the following conditions: first, that it be impossible for dog-like non-dogs to be thought of under this mode of presentation; and second, that it none the less be the case that grasping the sense of 'dog' does not require one to be familiar with the relevant science which

demarcates the species. Schiffer, so it appears, supposes these two conditions to be incompatible.

But they are not. The first condition may be met, if one adopts an externalist account of sense. According to such an account, the sense of a referring-expression is *de re*: specific to its *res* (McDowell 1977, 1984, 1986). The sense of 'dog', if the externalist is correct, is such that it would not be that sense, if it were not a way of thinking about dogs: members of the species *Canis familiaris*. Once this alternative conception is in place, there is no analogue to the objection brought against the idea that the sense of 'dog' is the doggy *Gestalt*. Schiffer's claim, as we have seen, is that two distinct biological species can share the same *Gestalt*, a fact which causes the intuitive criterion to be violated. But if, as the Fregean externalist believes, modes of presentation of natural kinds are reality-invoking, such a problem does not arise. Dogs and dog-like non-dogs cannot be thought about under the same mode of presentation because they *differ in their natures*. Ways of thinking about different species are, according to this picture, different ways of thinking. Phenomenologically, respective modes of presentation of dogs and dog-like non-dogs may be indistinguishable, but they in fact differ.

If what one thinks is determined by the nature of one's natural environment, it of course follows that one may occasionally be mistaken about what one is thinking. It is possible that somebody else, someone more conversant with how the relevant part of the world really is, may be in a better position to tell which thought, if any, one expresses with a sentence.[9] And it might be supposed that this threatens the intuitive doctrine that a person is authoritative on her own thoughts. But this needs careful handling. What the externalist denies is the Cartesian spin placed upon the notion of first-personal authority: the claim that a subject *cannot be wrong* about the contents of her mental states. It is none the less true that a person is authoritative about her own thoughts in the following sense: her opinion, though not infallible, tends to be reliable. If one wants an opinion on what someone is thinking, the person herself – and not someone else – is *usually* best-placed to get it right.

One might, none the less, suspect there to be an element of adhocism in the carving out of the externalist's position. The sort of externalist stance just sketched allows us to avoid the objection Schiffer rightly levels at the view of the sense of a natural kind-term as a stereotype or *Gestalt*, but one may wonder whether there are any independent reasons for taking the externalist line. There are. For one thing, the externalist is able to give intuitive descriptions of so-called 'twin earth' thought-

experiments such as the following.[10] Lois, we may stipulate, uses the word 'dog' correctly: she ascribes it to things which are, in fact, *dogs*: things which (although she is unaware of it) are members of *Canis familiaris*. Now suppose that Lois's environment were different in the following way: whereas her actual environment contains dogs, her counterfactual environment contains creatures which, although indistinguishable from dogs to Lois, are life-like robots rather than members of *Canis familiaris*. Our intuitions tell us that in this counterfactual situation, Lois would not mean by 'dog' what she actually means by it. In other words, even though things would seem exactly the same to Lois, the sense she attached to 'dog' would be different. And this is for the simple reason that the word would have a different referent.

Furthermore, someone who denies externalism, and thereby allows that sense can remain constant while reference changes, commits herself to a suspect view of mind-world relations. According to such a view, the realms of content and the physical universe are self-subsistent and 'thought relates to objects with an essential indirectness: by way of a blue print or specification which, if formulated, would be expressed in purely general terms' (McDowell 1977, p. 125). Now this is a dubious conception as it is. It is doubtful whether anything recognisable as the mind remains once we have removed the world from the scene. As McDowell elegantly puts it once more, 'seeing relations between a person and bits of the world, not prying into a hidden place whose contents could be just as they are even if there were no world – is (in part) what seeing into a person's mind is' (ibid., p. 126). But more than this, if our contents would be unchanged even if the world were different (or did not exist at all), then it follows that how the world is can make no essential difference to our state of mind. And if this is so, then the result can only be a kind of Cartesian scepticism.[11]

So much for the first condition: it can be met by embracing externalism, a doctrine which is itself well motivated.[12] The second condition – namely, that Lois should be able to grasp the sense of 'dog' without knowing the relevant science which demarcates the natural kind – can be met also, once the externalist proposal is properly elaborated. Even if ignorant of the relevant scientific theory, Lois counts as getting her mind around the nature of doghood by virtue of her 'cognitive and practical dealings with the world' (Pettit and McDowell 1986, p. 4). As a result of her location within her environment and upbringing within her linguistic community, Lois comes to apply the word 'dog' correctly to many things, taking it as read that something is a dog if it resembles in a relevant way the things she knows to be dogs. That is to say, Lois

means the word 'dog' as a word for a member of *that species* (Pettit and McDowell 1986, p. 4). That she may not know what the species is is a small matter; the meaning she attaches to 'dog' is determined by the nature of the species. This being so, Lois's way of thinking of the species is a mode of presentation that does not ask too much of her, and hence the dilemma that afflicts the description theory is avoided. The externalist may thus meet both conditions necessary for avoiding Schiffer's second objection. Thoughts expressible using natural kind-terms pose no special problem. And if this is true, then my argument stands: thoughts are the best candidates to serve as the contents of utterances and objects of the propositional attitudes.

This concludes my discussion of the first argument for taking propositions to be thoughts rather than states of affairs. Viewing propositions as thoughts best enables our attitude-ascriptions to make sense of the people to whom the attitudes are ascribed. Schiffer's two objections against this treatment, and his consequent endorsement of the hidden indexical theory, rely upon an overly rich conception of Fregean sense.

4. Falsehood

We can now move on to consider the second reason for taking propositions to be thoughts. It is this: if propositions were states of affairs – complexes of worldly objects and properties – there would be no accounting for the fact that some propositions are false. Let us see why not.

As we have seen, a state of affairs is something which has entities from the realm of reference as constituents. If we construe propositions as states of affairs, this means that the constituents of a proposition are the items which the proposition is about. Typically, the Russellian concerning propositions expands upon this conception by construing the state of affairs expressed by a sentence such as 'Fido is a dog' as an ordered pair of an object and property: something which is true just in case the object instantiates the property. As Schiffer explains, according to this way of thinking,

> [t]he simplest example of such a structured proposition would be a so called *singular proposition*, such as the ordered pair <<Fido, doghood>>. This proposition is true just in case Fido instantiates doghood, the property of being a dog. (Schiffer 1992, p. 501)

But at this point, our memory should be jogged. In Chapter 1, §2.2 we noted that a complex of object and a property can only act as a truthmaker

if it is a *unity*. To be a truthmaker for <Fido is a dog>, the complex of Fido and doghood must exist only if Fido is a dog, and this means that the complex must see Fido and doghood somehow glued together. What I want to argue now is that a consideration of what is essentially the same question – the supposed unity of states of affairs – undermines the idea that these entities can serve as propositions. Specifically, we shall see that the only way in which a Russellian can account for propositional unity entails that there cannot be propositions which are false.

As Russell appreciated all too well, a proposition is something more than a mere collection of its constituents. If it were no more than this, it would be indistinguishable from a *list*.[13] It would not have any content; it would not *say* anything. But coupling this understanding with a conception of propositions as states of affairs leads to immediate trouble. For if asked how a proposition can be unified, what can the Russellian say? The only answer available to the Russellian would seem to be this: the state of affairs <<Fido, doghood>> is unified just in case its constituents are united in fact; just in case, that is, Fido instantiates the property of doghood. Of course, we noted in Chapter 1 that precisely *how* objects and properties can be welded together to form a unity is a nice question, but let us put such worries to one side. For if states of affairs are supposed to act as propositions, there is a *special* problem when it comes the possibility of falsehood. If the unity of the proposition is provided by Fido instantiating the property of doghood, it follows that this proposition cannot be false. For it to be a proposition and not a list, it must be a unity; but the only available account of how it can be a unity requires Fido and the property of doghood to be unified *in fact*.

Clearly, what the Russellian needs, and, so it seems, what he cannot have, is an explanation of *how* Fido and the property of being a dog can be unified and yet Fido not be a dog. Somehow Fido and doghood must be glued together but not in reality; and it is quite unclear how this is possible. When push comes to shove, the Russellian can only say what we have seen Schiffer say: namely, that if it is false that Fido is a dog, the false proposition is the simple sequence <<Fido, doghood>>. But this cannot be a false *proposition*. A sequence of disconnected entities is not a unity and so cannot be the content of an utterance.

In desperation, the Russellian might say: if Fido does not actually instantiate doghood, they are none the less unified *in the mind* of someone who believes that Fido is a dog. But this is a philosophical dead end. For what does it mean to say that a proposition's constituents are unified into a proposition 'in the mind'? If it simply means that someone

believes that Fido is a dog, we are no further forward. For what requires explanation is how there can be an object of such a belief – a proposition – if propositions are supposed to have worldly constituents and if the proposition in question is false. If, on the other hand, for Fido and doghood to be unified 'in the mind' is for the activity of the mind to actually bring together the entities into an objective unity in the universe, then we surely have a preposterous result. For how can merely thinking have the power to unify items from the realm of reference into a unity? It looks as if an acceptance of such a view amounts to a belief in the occult.

This being so, it seems that, once propositions are held to be states of affairs, a false proposition can only be a complex of unconnected entities, in which case it is not a proposition but an aggregate. As Richard Cartwright elegantly explains, '[e]ither the constituents of the proposition are appropriately united, in which case the proposition is inevitably true; or they are not, and then we have no proposition at all' (Cartwright 1987, p. 84). False propositions are out of the question.

At this point, two objections may be made. First, it might be claimed that the argument that there cannot be false Russellian propositions depends upon the assumption that such things are sequences of objects and properties, and that such a set-theoretical approach is uncompulsory for the Russellian. Second, an objector may point out that there is a unity problem for thoughts too, and hence claim that the supporter of a Fregean conception of propositions is no better off. I shall address these two complaints in turn.

The first complaint simply fails to hit home. It is true that someone regarding propositions as states of affairs is not obliged to suppose them to be set-theoretical entities. She may regard them as *sui generis* complexes of objects and properties. But this is of no consequence, for all that is needed to generate the problem concerning falsehood is the assumption that the constituents of a proposition are the entities that it is about. Once this assumption is made, it immediately becomes mysterious how the constituents of such a proposition (in the simplest case, an object and a property) can be sufficiently unified in order to *be* a proposition, and yet not be unified *in fact*. This way of putting the problem does not presuppose a set-theoretical account of Russellian propositions.

The obvious way out is to take propositions to have constituents which go proxy for the objects they are about. Russell himself later dropped the view of propositions as states of affairs, preferring to regard their constituents as symbols (Russell 1918).[14] However, having seen

already that we need to regard propositions as thoughts in order for our propositional attitude-ascriptions to do the job of making adequate sense of those to whom propositional attitudes are ascribed, the moral should be obvious. In order to get round the problem of how propositions can be false, we should regard them as complexes of senses. That is, we should treat propositions as *thoughts*.

But this is the point at which the second objection may appear to have some bite. For although thoughts are better placed than states of affairs to allow for false propositions, the puzzle of how a proposition differs from a mere list remains unsolved. This is a serious problem, whatever one's view of the constituents of propositions. So it might be wondered whether we are any better off construing propositions as thoughts rather than as states of affairs.

This needs careful handing. Some have thought that the Fregean thesis that predicates refer to *concepts* (that is, functions from objects to truth-values) provides the basis for an explanation of propositional unity. Dummett, for example, thinks that once we see the referent of a predicate as a concept – something essentially incomplete, which cannot be referred to by an abstract noun – the mystery of how object and concept come to be unified is solved. Or, rather, no puzzle remains because objects and concepts need no cement to form a unity.[15] This, then, is supposed to be the solution to the unity problem at the level of reference. I presume that a corresponding solution is intended at the level of sense in order to explain the unity of the *thought*. But whatever we have here, it is not an explanation of propositional unity. For one thing, at best, it merely *labels* the desired unity; it does not explain it. For another, it looks as if an exactly corresponding unity problem afflicts the object–concept analysis. As Mark Sainsbury puts it,

> [t]he question of what makes the difference between a collection consisting of a function and its potential arguments, on the one hand, and the 'insertion' of these arguments into the function, and their insertion in one rather than another order, is of essentially the same kind as our original question (1996, p. 146).

This, however, does not mean that thoughts are no better placed than states of affairs to act as propositions. True, there is no ready *explanation* of how senses can be unified to form something sayable. This is a huge problem which awaits solution. But taking the constituents of a proposition to be entities other than those things which the proposition is about at least *allows for*, even if it does not explain, the possibility of

unity without truth. For if propositions have as constituents things which go proxy for the objects the proposition is about, the question of a proposition's unity is thereby separated from that of the proposition's truth. Obviously, such a move is beyond the resources of the Russellian.

5. Thoughts as the objects of the attitudes

5.1 At this point, we may harmonize our considerations about the nature of propositions with the account of the logical form of propositional attitude-ascriptions recommended in Chapter 2. What we have now is a logical form proposal and a claim about the ontology concomitant upon it. The claim as to logical form has it that the logical form of, say, (13) is represented by

(17) Believes (Lois Lane, that). Superman can fly.

In Chapter 2 we noted that if we take the demonstrative 'that' to refer to the proposition expressed by the content-sentence, and not to its utterance, the objections to Davidson's account can be side-stepped. Having seen that the unity of a Russellian proposition can only guarantee its truth, and having pondered on the counter-intuitive consequences of taking such entities to be the objects of propositional attitudes, we are entitled to conclude that the demonstrative 'that' in a report such as (17) names the thought expressed by the content-sentence.

All in all, what we have here is a marriage of the views of Davidson and Frege. The Davidsonian aspect is the paratactic proposal: this enables extensionality to be preserved without following Frege in taking the words of the content-sentence to change their reference. The Fregean influence is twofold. First, the item named by the demonstrative 'that' is a thought. Second, the idea that expressions are substitutable *salva veritate* in attitude attributions if, and only if, they have the same sense is preserved. The divergence from Frege comes with the account of logical form which explains this phenomenon: our adaptation of Davidson's paratactic analysis enables us to explain this while avoiding a commitment to the words in such contexts referring to their customary senses. Nevertheless, many will balk at admitting thoughts into our ontology, and I shall now consider some of the objections to such an ontological commitment.

5.2 One objection can be nipped in the bud immediately. McDowell, whose austere conception of sense I have adopted, suggests that there is

no need to treat senses (and hence thoughts) as entities of any kind. According to McDowell,

> [a]s far as names are concerned, the ontology of a theory of sense, on the present suggestion, need not exceed the names and their bearers. To construe knowledge of the sense of an expression . . . as, at some different level, knowledge of . . . an entity . . . seems from this perspective, gratuitous. (McDowell 1977, p. 115)

But it is not gratuitous. The best available account of the logical form of propositional attitude-ascriptions has it that thoughts are named by a demonstrative 'that'. And it follows from this that thoughts, and the senses of which thoughts comprise, are entities.[16]

We have no choice but to reify thoughts. But what should we say about them? To be sure, Frege's own remarks about the ontological status of thoughts are not terribly encouraging. Wishing (rightly) to commit himself to the view that some thoughts have never been expressed, and also to the thesis that there were truths (true thoughts) before there was any sentient life, Frege portrays thoughts as occupants of a special 'third realm': a realm distinct from both the realm of ideas and the physical universe (Frege 1918, p. 45).

The problem with such 'realm' talk is that it inevitably prompts a conception of thoughts as *self-subsistent* entities. If the realm of thoughts really is a region of reality distinct from the physical universe in which thoughts are expressed, then it would seem to follow that the thought expressed by a given utterance is not intrinsically *of* that utterance at all. But, as Dummett has told us (1986, pp. 251–2), this picture makes the everyday phenomenon of meaningful language-use mysterious. For if the sense of a sentence were a self-subsistent entity of a distinct realm, how could an utterance – an occurrence in the physical universe – come to express such a thing? Speaking meaningfully would have to be a matter of an utterance in the physical world and an entity from the third realm coming into correspondence; and it is quite unclear what we are to make of this. With thoughts understood as Frege seems to understand them, the schematic relation of *expressing* is unable to bear the weight demanded of it.

Furthermore, it is equally unclear how a psychological event, an act of understanding, could have as its content an occupant of the third realm. How could someone get her mind around such a thing? Frege's response is notoriously, and infamously, inadequate. 'It is', says Frege, 'advisable to choose a special expression; the word "grasp"

suggests itself for the purpose. To the grasping of thoughts there must correspond a special mental capacity, the power of thinking' (Frege 1918, p. 51). Needless to say, this serves only to mystify, rather than shed light on, the activity of thinking. We need the 'grasping' metaphor to be cashable, and the problem is that the Fregean conception of thoughts rules this out.

In order to fully appreciate the awkwardness and obscurity of Frege's apparent position, we need only imagine what an analogously Fregean account of chess moves would look like.[17] On such a view, moves in chess, like Fregean thoughts, would be treated as self-subsistent objects, rather than kinds of thing done with pieces. The nature of such ghostly entities would be characterizable without needing to mention chess pieces at all, and, curiouser still, a piece's making a certain move would have to be explained as its coming to be correlated with one of these queer objects.

Such a construal of moves in chess is evidently absurd because such things are not *self-subsistent* objects. They are, by contrast, intrinsically *of* pieces in the following sense: a move in chess can only be thought of as something done by a piece. When a piece makes a move, it is not a matter of the piece and the move coming into correspondence; it is merely a matter of the piece being moved in a certain way. Crucially, however, and as Dummett makes clear (1986, p. 249), this sort of dependence upon pieces does not compromise the evident fact that there are moves which have never been made. The dependence is, one might say, *logical* or *conceptual* rather than *existential*:

> This 'of' of logical dependence is not properly expressed by saying that a certain move exists only if there is a piece that has that move, since, as just noted, we can speak of moves that have never been assigned to any piece. It means, rather, that to conceive of any move is to conceive of a piece as having that move. (ibid., p. 249)

Moves in chess are objects all right: we can refer to them using proper names. They are, furthermore, abstract objects. But the crucial point is that they are not self-subsistent; they are conceptually (though not existentially) dependent upon pieces. A move in chess is something done with a piece.

Let us now return to thoughts. As the preceding remarks about chess pieces bear out, the problem with the Fregean position lies not with the commitment to the *abstractness* of thoughts. The source of Frege's

difficulty is, rather, his 'realm' talk and the construal of thoughts as self-subsistent entities which follows from it. Once thoughts are taken to be self-subsistent entities occupying their own region of reality (once, that is, they are conceptually divorced from utterances), they are too foreign to our language for any talk of words and thoughts corresponding to be of any help.

But matters are not hopeless. For one thing, we have just seen how an analogously mysterious account of chess moves can be avoided. For another, we can take this hint and combine it with an insight gained in Chapter 2: namely, that the *of* relation between an utterance and a thing said (a proposition) must be that which holds between a token and a type. We are now in a position to satisfy the intuition that some thoughts have never been expressed without thereby committing ourselves to the Fregean myth of a realm of self-subsistent thoughts.

The way in which Frege's conception of thoughts should be adapted is suggested by Dummett (1986). As Dummett would have it, thoughts are not self-subsistent objects but *utterance-types*. The thought expressed by the utterance of an indicative sentence should be construed as 'a *feature* of the utterance, accruing to it in consequence of a variety of facts: the sentence of which the utterance is a token; the context of the utterance; and the language considered as a conventional practice' (1986, p. 261). In other words, for an utterance to express a certain thought is for the utterance to have a certain property: that of belonging to some thought-expression-type.[18] Let us call thoughts thus conceived as utterance-types *neo-Fregean*. While it is harmless to regard neo-Fregean thoughts as objects (because, like chess moves, we can pick them out using singular referring-expressions), they differ from fully Fregean thoughts in being intrinsically *of* utterances. Just as to conceive of a move in chess is to conceive of a piece making that move, to conceive of a (neo-Fregean) thought is to conceive of something done with words (Dummett 1986, pp. 249–50). As Edward Harcourt explains, 'the notion of an utterance's expressing a thought [is] prior to that of a thought itself' (1993, p. 308).

Two features of this account are worth stressing. First, an utterance's expressing a thought is no longer a mysterious correspondence of items from distinct realms: it is, simply, the utterance's being of a certain kind. Second, our realist intuitions concerning thoughts are not thereby compromised. For the fact that thoughts are intrinsically *of* utterances is quite compatible with an acceptance that some thoughts have never been expressed. An as yet unexpressed thought is not an occupant of Frege's third realm but a possible feature of utterances that no utterance has yet had.

The second point is the really crucial one. According to the conception of propositions as neo-Fregean thoughts, it is impossible to conceive of propositions without conceiving of utterances; and yet propositions exist before they are first expressed. Two analogies help this second point to stick. The first is the now familiar analogy between utterance-types and moves in chess. As we have seen already, the fact that a move in chess can only be thought of as a move *of* a piece does not inhibit us from talking of moves which have never been made. Such as yet unmade moves are moves that *could* be made with pieces and there is nothing mysterious about this. The second analogy, also drawn by Dummett, is between the expression of a thought and the humming of a tune (1986, pp. 260–1): the tune hummed, Dummett says, is a type of performance, while the thought expressed by an utterance is a type of utterance. Given that this second analogy is good, and given that we are prepared to allow that there could be tunes which have never been performed, we are entitled to say that there can be thoughts which have never been expressed. An unexpressed thought is an untokened type of utterance: it is, so to speak, a possible move in the language-game.

As we saw in connection with the discussion of chess moves, it is vital to pick apart two ways of understanding the 'of' of dependence. First, there is the 'of' of *logical dependence* or *conceptual connection*. It is in this sense that moves in chess are dependent upon pieces, tunes dependent upon performances and thoughts dependent upon utterances. To think of a chess move is to think of a piece making that move; to think of a tune is to think of its being played or performed; and to conceive of a thought is to conceive of an utterance's expressing it. But this 'of' of conceptual connection should not be confused with the distinct 'of' of *existential dependence*. We noted that chess moves, though they can only be *conceived of* as moves made by (actual or possible) pieces, need not actually have been made by a piece in order to exist; and, as we have seen, the same goes for tunes and performances. Consequently, the right thing to say about utterance-types is this. They are *logically* or *conceptually* dependent upon language-use, but *existentially* independent of language-use: the fact that thoughts are intrinsically expressible is quite compatible with thoughts, as it were, waiting to be expressed. Although to conceive of a thought is to conceive of its being expressed, it does not follow that every thought has been expressed, only that every thought is expressible. We can have the realism that we crave, yet without being committed to the dubious delights of Frege's 'third realm'.

5.3 I shall end this section by replying to three potential worries. First, it might be wondered whether the content of an utterance can really be an utterance-type. Is not a type of utterance a thing which *has* content rather than a content itself? Here the analogy between acts of humming and acts of saying may come to our aid once more. Consider Eleanor's humming of 'Take the "A" Train', an event which, we shall stipulate, took place in her bedroom at 8.45 a.m. on 10 August 1999. We have agreed already that the tune which she hummed is a type of performance; but this does not prevent us from saying that the performance-type in question is the thing Eleanor hummed: the content of her particular performance. And if this is so for performance-types, then something similar must be the case for utterance-types. The thing which has content is a particular, unrepeatable utterance, while its content is a type of which it is a token.

Second, one might worry about an utterance-type's suitability to be the referent of the demonstrative 'that' of an attitude report. After all, a type of utterance is not present in space and time to be pointed at. But it is by no means implausible to think that such demonstration can occur as a case of 'deferred ostension'.[19] Let us exploit the analogy between thoughts and tunes for a final time. Suppose that Susan is asked what Eleanor's favourite tune is, but has forgotten its name. As a result, she somewhat sheepishly says 'It's this', and follows this utterance by humming a few bars of 'Take the "A" Train'. In such a case the demonstrative does not refer to the particular performance that follows it: Eleanor's favourite tune is not any particular performance of it by anyone, but is the tune itself: a type of performance. Nevertheless, the demonstrating and humming succeed in picking out the tune, and they do so because the presence of the performance serves to secure the reference of the demonstrative to the type of performance of which the particular performance is a token. But if this kind of thing is possible when it comes to types of performance, then it is surely possible when it comes to types of utterance.

Finally, I might be accused of having failed to discharge the promised obligation of making thoughts fit for inclusion in our ontology. I have not, after all, given a precise account of their identity conditions. But this objection is ill-judged. First of all, if we apply Frege's intuitive criterion, we have the beginnings, at least, of an account of what it is for two utterances to express different thoughts: two utterances are of, we might say, different thought-expression types, if it is possible for a rational person to understand them both and yet take conflicting attitudes towards them. But, most importantly, the problem to which the conception of

thoughts as utterance-types is a solution does *not* concern the identity conditions for thoughts; it concerns their *ontological nature*. If we regard thoughts as self-subsistent items, things which are not intrinsically *of* utterances, we are beggared for an account of how an utterance could come to express a thought. The account of thoughts as types of utterance side-steps this problem, and, furthermore, does so without forcing us to give up our realist intuitions about thoughts: namely, that thoughts exist before they are actually expressed. Identity-conditions are simply not the issue.

None the less, should I not seek to give some suitably sharpened criteria for the identity of thoughts? Not at this stage. Whereas someone making an initial commitment to thoughts should certainly say something about what sort of thing she takes a thought to be, there need be no immediate account forthcoming concerning identity-conditions. Puzzles for an account of thought-individuation concerning, for example, indexical thoughts, are to be considered in due course once the conception of the ontological nature of thoughts is in place. Analogously, an account of the ontological nature of events (as, say, particulars, universals or fact-like things) scratches a different itch than something of the form 'If x and y are events, then $x = y$ if and only if . . . '. Again, I want to say that anyone introducing events into their ontology should tell us what sort of things events are, though they need not in the same breath give us an account of their identity-conditions which deals with the well-documented puzzle-cases. Indeed, in the case of events, one may dispute whether the category of events needs a criterion of identity to defend it (Mellor 1987, p. 114), and one may wonder whether the same perhaps goes for thoughts. We certainly get along perfectly well without one.[20]

6. Conclusion

In Chapter 2 we came to appreciate that propositions have a central place in our ontology. We now know that these propositions must be construed as thoughts. Only if propositions are thus construed can interpretation of speakers' utterances and the ascription of propositional attitudes do its job of making sense of people; and only if propositions are thoughts can we allow for the possibility of propositions that are false. But our point of arrival is not thoroughly Fregean: in order to avoid the kind of trouble caused by taking thoughts to be self-subsistent objects, we must regard thoughts as utterance-types.

What I want to argue now is that facts are nothing but thoughts, thus conceived, that are true. While thoughts are a fundamental ontological

category, facts are not. Why this is so, and why philosophers have wrongly supposed otherwise, is the subject of the next chapter.

Notes

1. For the distinction between the realms of reference and sense, see Chapter 1, note 12.
2. Indeed, with a Russellian account of propositions in place, it swiftly becomes obvious that there cannot be a relation of correspondence between a true proposition and a fact. If the true proposition that *a* is *F* is supposed to be the instantiation of *F* by *a*, the relation between the true proposition and the fact can only be that of identity. These considerations prompt one particular *identity theory* of truth, albeit an identity theory that is ultimately indefensible. For further discussion of this kind of identity, see Chapter 5, §2 and Chapter 7, §2 below.
3. The 'at a given time' is important here since it leaves room for Frege's view (1918, p. 40) that an utterance of 'Today is fine' on d_1 and an utterance of 'Yesterday was fine' on d_2 may express the same thought. That I may assent to 'Today is fine' uttered on d_1 but not to 'Yesterday was fine' uttered on d_2 (because I have misremembered how the weather was yesterday) does not show the utterances, by the intuitive criterion, to express different thoughts because the conflicting attitudes to them took place at *different times*. (This point is well made by Gareth Evans (1981, pp. 307–8).) Of course, one may, for other reasons, believe that the two utterances express different thoughts. I am not concerned to defend the view that they express the same thought, only that their expressing the same thought may be reconciled with the intuitive criterion.
4. See, for example, Frege (1904b), quoted in Evans (1982, p. 19).
5. This way of departmentalizing Salmon's project is borrowed from Michael Morris (1992, pp. 35–40). I owe much to his incisive discussion.
6. The source of this style of argument is Saul Kripke (1980). It is also to be found in the work of Salmon (1986, pp. 64–5) and Mark Richard (1990, pp. 64–6).
7. At this point readers may wonder why I have not introduced the conception of propositions as functions from possible worlds to truth-values (Stalnaker 1984, ch. 1). The reason is that, like Schiffer, I suspect that such a conception simply yields 'alternative styles of bookkeeping' (Schiffer 1992, p. 508) to states of affairs accounts. The propositions of a possible worlds account, like states of affairs, are notoriously coarse-grained.
8. The hidden indexical theory is defended in Crimmins and Perry (1989) and in Crimmins (1992).
9. Imagine, for example, a twin earth on which people continually hallucinate a water-like liquid. Given the correctness of externalism, the inhabitants of the twin earth express no thoughts expressible by means of the word 'water' since no such stuff exists in their environment. They think that they express such thoughts, but, in fact, appearances are in this case deceptive. An inhabitant unaffected by the hallucination would know the 'layout of a victim's

subjectivity' (McDowell 1986, p. 154) better than the victim herself. (The example is borrowed from Colin McGinn (1989, pp. 32–3).

10. Such thought experiments were first undertaken by Putnam (1975).
11. McDowell regards the adoption of an externalist account of content as essential to combatting the aforementioned Cartesian scepticism. As McDowell (1986, p. 146) puts it,

> [i]n a fully Cartesian picture, the inner life takes place in an autonomous realm, transparent to the introspective awareness of its subject; the access of subjectivity to the rest of the world becomes correspondingly problematic, in a way that has familiar manifestations in the mainstream of post-Cartesian epistemology . . . [There opens up] a gulf, which it might be the task of philosophy to try to bridge, or declare unbridgeable, between the realm of subjectivity and the realm of ordinary objects.

The way to deal with such a gulf is to refuse to let it open, and this is done by holding that content is world-dependent. To use McDowell's own lurid metaphor, we must insist on 'the interpenetration of inner and outer' (McDowell 1986, p. 154).

I agree with this. Crucially, what it demonstrates is that the desired interpenetration of content and world can be achieved without committing oneself to the kind of identity theory of truth which, as we shall see in Chapter 7 below, both McDowell (1994) and Hornsby (1997, 1999) come to favour. To use McDowell's own metaphor, if we wish to close the Cartesian gap between mind and world, an adoption of externalism will do the trick; there is no need to hold that a true proposition literally *is* a worldly state of affairs.

12. The literature concerning externalism has proliferated alarmingly in recent years, the arguments to and fro becoming more and more arcane. Gregory McCulloch (1989, 1995) does an excellent job of clarifying the arguments and explaining why the externalist's case still stands.
13. 'A proposition is essentially a unity, and when analysis has destroyed the unity, no enumeration of constituents will restore the proposition' (Russell 1903, p. 50).
14. Before this, Russell adopted his 'multiple relation theory' of judgment (1910, 1912). This theory abandoned the conception of judgment as a binary relation between a judger and a proposition and, in effect, denied the existence of propositions. For discussion of why Russell dropped this theory, see Hylton (1984 and 1990), Candlish (1996) and Sainsbury (1996).
15. A concept and an object, or a relation and two objects, need no glue to fit them together: they fit together naturally, in a way we can think of as analogous to that in which a predicate and a proper name, or a relational expression and two proper names, fit together to form a sentence. And this will seem to us natural and unproblematic as soon as we grasp that we can think of a concept *only* as the referent of a predicate, of a relation *only* as the referent of a relational expression' (Dummett, 1973, p. 175).
16. The reification of senses means that the notion of sense is more substantial than McDowell would allow. None the less, we are still entitled to call our conception of sense 'austere' for the simple reason that McDowell's central point still stands: to know a name's sense is to know its reference (not referent).

17. The analogy between thoughts and chess moves is utilized by Dummett (1986). I shall return to it below.
18. The art term 'thought-expression-type' is borrowed from Harcourt (1993).
19. See McFetridge (1976, pp. 141–2).
20. When it comes to the (seeming) need to supply identity conditions for thoughts, I am in agreement with Strawson (1998, p. 403).

4
Facts are True Thoughts

1. Résumé

Let us review the conclusions of the previous three chapters. In Chapter 1, correspondence theories were revealed to be committed to viewing facts as truthmakers. My charge was that such a conception rests on a myth: namely, that truths need truthmakers at all. Having denied that facts need be seen as truthmakers, we noted that we had thereby undermined the major motivation for taking facts to be states of affairs: complexes of worldly objects and properties.

As I said at the end of Chapter 1, my view is that facts are not states of affairs but, as Frege holds (1918, p. 51), *true thoughts*: items with senses, rather than objects and properties, as constituents. On this view of facts, they are occupants of the realm of sense, not the realm of reference. Needless to say, identifying facts with true thoughts is controversial, and Chapters 2 and 3 were designed to prepare the ground for the identification. Chapter 2 was a defence of an ontology of propositions, their precise nature being left open. That there exist propositions was a conclusion supported by two arguments. First, propositions are by far the most plausible candidates to be the vehicles of truth. Second, the propositional attitudes are best construed as binary relations between a thinking subject and a proposition. Specifically, Davidson's paratactic account of the logical form of sentences in *oratio obliqua* (Davidson 1968) requires both emendation and generalization: the demonstrative 'that' should be taken to name a proposition rather than an utterance; and the resulting account should be generalized to cover the other propositional attitudes and, indeed, any sentence containing an (apparent) 'that'-clause.

Chapter 3 then argued, albeit with a significant *caveat*, that Frege is correct about the nature of propositions. That is to say, propositions are thoughts rather than complexes of worldly entities (as Russell supposed). Only if propositions are conceived of in this way can speakers' utterances and propositional attitudes be seen as intelligible. And only if propositions are thoughts, rather than complexes of objects and properties, is there a chance of allowing for a proposition's being unified and yet false. Since Russellian propositions are, in effect, the same entities as the states of affairs posited by correspondence theorists, it follows that we have shown that states of affairs should be seen as neither truthmakers nor truthbearers.

The *caveat* with Frege's treatment of propositions concerned his view that thoughts are conceptually distinct from language and language-users, inhabitants of what he describes as a 'third realm'. Such extravagance was abandoned in favour of a Dummettian conception of thoughts as types of utterance (Dummett 1986). If thoughts are viewed as utterance-types, Frege's realism about thoughts – his intuition that there were thoughts before anyone was around to express them – can be coupled with an acknowledgement that thoughts are intrinsically *of* utterances.

The upshot of all this is that Chapters 1 to 3 have brought an ontological dichotomy into question. It is tempting to distinguish facts and thoughts: facts, one might think, are states of affairs which make thoughts true. But if it is wrong to suppose that facts are truthmakers, while correct to admit that thoughts exist, why should we be tempted by the conception of facts as states of affairs? Why, indeed, should we regard facts as ontologically basic entities at all? For there is always the possibility of simply identifying facts with true thoughts. The purpose of the present chapter is to defend just this identity claim.

2. Motivating the identification

The most powerful motivation for identifying facts with true thoughts is that of ontological economy. Since we do not need facts to acts as truthmakers, they need not be conceived of as sentence-shaped occupants of the realm of reference. So, given that facts are entities of some kind, it is attractive to reduce them to sentence-shaped things which *do* have a rightful place in our ontology: (true) thoughts. In the rest of this section we shall see that this argument can be buttressed with more positive considerations in favour of the identification.

Strawson, for one, points out that we are under no obligation to regard language/world relations as anything but sub-propositional. While

some have been tempted to regard <*a* is *F*> as being *about* a state of affairs, this is a misapprehension. As he puts it, '[t]hat (person, thing, etc.) to which the referring part of the statement refers, and which the describing part of the statement fits or fails to fit, is that which the statement is *about*' (Strawson 1950, p. 36). In other words, <*a* is *F*> is about *a*, not some state of affairs. If one utters truly in uttering '*a* is *F*', the thing one has truly described is *a*; and in doing so one has thereby *stated*, not described, a fact. Facts are *things stated* (and believed, known or noticed, etc.). As Strawson (1950, pp. 37–8) himself puts it,

> [t]he only plausible candidate for the position of what (in the world) makes [a] statement true is the fact that it states; but the fact that it states is not something in the world. . . . These points are, of course, reflected in the behaviour of the word 'fact' in ordinary language, . . . 'Fact', like 'true', 'states' and 'statement' is wedded to 'that'-clauses; and there is nothing unholy about that union. Facts are known, stated, learnt, forgotten, overlooked, commented on, communicated or noticed. (Each of these verbs may be followed by a 'that'-clause). Facts are what statements (when true) state; they are not what statements are about.

All of this points directly to the thesis that facts are true thoughts. We saw in the previous two chapters that the objects of propositional attitudes are thoughts; so, if Strawson is correct in thinking that facts may be the objects of propositional attitudes (if, that is, facts are things stated, learned, remembered, and such like), it would seem to follow that facts are (true) thoughts.

This conclusion gains further justification if we reconsider the paratactic approach to sentences containing apparent 'that'-clauses which was recommended in Chapters 2 and 3 above. There it was argued that Davidson's paratactic theory of indirect speech requires a small, but none the less significant emendation. Davidson's theory, we may remember, amounts to the claim that sentences such as

(1) Lois Lane said that Superman can fly

wear their logical form on their sleeves except for one small point (Davidson 1968, p. 106). Take 'said' to be a two-place predicate, insert a full stop after 'that', take 'that' to be a demonstrative referring to the utterance of the sentence which follows it, and there you have it. Hence, we can represent Davidson's logical form proposal for (1) as

(2) Said (Lois Lane, that). Superman can fly.

My claim, it should be recalled, is that this logical form proposal is correct, but that we must think again about the ontology concomitant on it. We should take the demonstrative 'that' in (2) to refer, not to the *utterance* of 'Superman can fly' which follows it, but to the *thought* which this utterance expresses.

As we saw in Chapter 2, §3.3, we can apply this paratactic account to all sentences containing (seeming) 'that'-clauses. (And in doing so, we thereby avoid the problems with 'that *p*' which Davidson has brought to our attention (Davidson 1996, 1997).) Specifically, we can represent the logical form of

(3) It is true that Superman can fly

as

(4) True (that). Superman can fly,

in which, once more, the demonstrative 'that' refers to <Superman can fly>: the thought. Once the demonstrative is understood in this way, (4) commits us to the view that thoughts are truthbearers: it is the thing demonstrated by 'that' – the thought – which is true. But there is more to come. For if our unified account of 'that'-clauses represents (3) as (4), then it will also represent

(5) It is a fact that Superman can fly

as

(6) Fact (that). Superman can fly.

Once we decide to apply the emended paratactic account to all sentences containing apparent 'that'-clauses, we have no option but to apply it to sentences containing 'it is a fact that'. Now we have a significant result. For, since the respective utterances of the demonstrative in (4) and (6) both refer to <Superman can fly>, it follows that the thing which is true is the thing which is the fact. The case for identifying facts with true thoughts has been developed and given a more theoretical basis.

Let us now return to Strawson. Given the nature of his own remarks about facts, one might expect him to simply endorse the identification of facts with truths. Interestingly, however, Strawson himself holds back from adopting the identity thesis suggested by thrust of his own reasoning. While he acknowledges that '[i]f you prize the statements off the world you prize the facts off it too' (Strawson 1950, p. 39), he none the less claims that '[i]t would . . . be wrong . . . to identify "fact" and

"true statement"; for these expressions have different roles in our language, as can be seen by the experiment of trying to interchange them in context' (ibid., p. 38). What are we to make of this?

Let us first of all consider the kind of linguistic evidence which Strawson believes to undermine the identification of facts with true thoughts. Presumably, Strawson has in mind phenomena such as the following: propositions, thoughts or statements, but not facts, are described as true or false; propositions, thoughts or statements, but not facts, are described as detailed or intelligible (Rundle 1979, p. 329); and we can say both 'One fact about Roger is that he can be trusted' and 'One true proposition about Roger is that he can be trusted', but not 'One fact about Roger is the true proposition that he can be trusted' (ibid., p. 329).

However, what is striking about such remarks is how seldom, if ever, they are accompanied by an explanation of how they are supposed to prove that facts are distinct from true thoughts. Without doubt, they show that there are occasions in which intersubstituting 'fact' and 'true proposition' (or 'true thought') causes the resulting sentence to be odd or awkward. But more work has to be done before this evidence can be treated as having any metaphysical import. For, in the wake of the good reasons for identifying facts with true thoughts – reasons which go beyond a simple appeal to ordinary discourse – we might wonder whether our describing, for example, propositions, but not facts, as true has some explanation other than that facts and true propositions are distinct kinds of entity.[1] In particular, we might hypothesize that the differences in application of 'fact' and 'true proposition' are nothing but accidents of linguistic history with no metaphysical implications whatsoever. As J.M. Shorter has noted (1962, p. 292), it is plausible to suppose that 'fact' has undergone a shift of meaning, and hence that differences in application between 'fact' and 'true proposition' are a matter of the accidental survival of the former's earlier meaning. As Shorter explains, it seems that 'fact' was originally used as a synonym for 'event': according to *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, early occurrences saw it used to mean *a thing done* or *something that has really occurred* (Onions 1983, p. 717). Consequently, we can offer the following explanation of the idioms which take only one of 'fact' and 'true proposition': such failures of substitution are the results of a hangover from the early usage of 'fact' as equivalent to 'event'. That is to say, the reason why, for example, we do not describe a fact as true is, most likely, an historical accident and nothing more: the fact that this part of our discourse concerning 'fact' is still stained with its old meaning.

The moral is, I think, this. The considerations which favour facts being true thoughts (some of which, as we have seen, are presented by Strawson himself) trump the linguistic evidence which counts against this identification. For the latter evidence does not irresistibly lead to the conclusion that facts and true thoughts are distinct. It admits of an explanation altogether more philosophically mundane.

So much for Strawson's reason for holding back from identifying facts with true thoughts. When it comes to the question of what he supposes facts to be, if not true thoughts, Strawson's position is, alas, obscure. To be sure, facts are not states of affairs. He is clear that a fact 'is not an object; not even (as some have supposed) a complex object consisting of one or more particular elements (constituents, parts) and a universal element (constituent, part)' (Strawson 1950, p. 37). But, Strawson argues, neither are facts true thoughts. So what are they? Strawson is content to say that 'the fact to which the statement "corresponds" is the *pseudo*-material correlate of the statement as a whole' (ibid., p. 37); so we can assume that he takes facts to be abstract objects which are somehow logically dependent upon, but not identical with, true thoughts. But the worry with this is twofold. First, such an account remains gestural. Second, if facts are distinct from true thoughts, then it is hard to avoid the conclusion that a correspondence theory of truth has been let in by the back door. If a fact is a *correlate* (albeit a 'pseudomaterial' correlate) of a true thought, the fact and true thought are distinct. But if this is the case, then the fact would seem to be a candidate for being a truthmaker. Of course, such facts would not be concrete entities: Strawson is clear about this. But, as we noted in Chapter 1 §2.2, a correspondence theorist need not regard his facts as concrete.[2]

The situation is this. Strawson's initial insight that true statements state, rather than describe, facts points very directly towards the thesis that facts are true thoughts. Strawson only holds back from identifying facts with truths because he believes certain linguistic evidence counts against it. But, given the obscurity surrounding Strawson's own positive remarks about facts, and given, further, the comparative weakness of this linguistic evidence, my suggestion is that we should take his initial remarks at face value: as indicating that facts are indeed true thoughts. In saying something true, one has not *described* a fact; one has *stated* a fact. And this demonstrates that a fact is a true statement – a true thought – rather than something from the realm of reference. Indeed, many years after his original article on truth, this seems to be the position which Strawson himself has come to adopt:

> The relevant fact is not something or anything 'in the world' which makes the proposition true. A proposition, an intensional abstract item, may have many properties: it may be simple or complex; it may entail or be incompatible with this, that or the other proposition. It may also have the property of being true; and this is what a fact is – a truth: just as much an intensional abstract entity as the proposition which 'fits' or 'corresponds to' it. (Strawson 1998, p. 403)

Facts are nothing more than truths: intensional abstract items which are true. In other words, facts are true thoughts.

Having said this, the thesis that facts are true thoughts faces two kinds of objector. The first agrees that facts are entities of some kind, but holds that there are insurmountable obstacles to the identification of facts with true thoughts. Typically, this objector holds that facts have features which are not shared by thoughts. The second kind of objector is altogether more radical. His claim is that there is no good reason to suppose that facts are entities at all, and hence that the very idea of trying to reduce facts to true thoughts is misconceived. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to replying to both kinds of objection in turn.

3. Facts as true thoughts: the usual objections surveyed

3.1 Presuming that facts are entities, why would anyone take them to be entities other than true thoughts? Given what has gone before, one potential answer to this question may be put to one side immediately. The arguments of Chapter 1 have exposed as misconceived the commonly-held thesis that facts are truthmakers; so there is no reason to suppose that facts are barred from being true thoughts on this score. None the less, the literature abounds with objections to the identification of facts with true thoughts which do not presuppose that facts are truthmakers; and it is now time to consider them.

3.2 The first such objection has its origins in the work of G.E. Moore (1953, p. 308), has been endorsed by A.J. Ayer (1971, p. 211), but has been propounded more recently by Fine (1982, pp. 46–7):

> . . . even within the confines of a simple modal language, with existence as its sole predicate, it is possible to show that facts are not propositions. For consider, the proposition *p* that Carter was president in 1979 and the fact *f* that Carter was president in 1979. Then

> the proposition *p* exists even should Carter not be president, but the fact *f* does not. Therefore *p* and *f* are distinct.

Fine alleges that the proposition and the fact have different modal properties, and so cannot be the same.

Without doubt, this argument has a whiff of sophistry about it, and Cartwright (1987, pp. 76–8) shows us how it can be neatly defused. Of course, it is correct to say that, had Carter not been president in 1979, the proposition that Carter was president would still have existed. Equally, it is correct to say that, had Carter not been president in 1979, there would have been nothing truly describable as the fact that Carter was president in 1979. But this second truth needs careful unpacking. For Fine's argument assumes the following: that, had Carter not been president in 1979, the entity which is the fact would not have existed. In other words, it assumes that, in the counterfactual situation in question, the entity actually correctly describable as the fact would simply be missing from the universe. And it is this claim which may be disputed.

An analogy may help. To use Cartwright's own example (ibid., p. 78), there is someone correctly describable as the author of *Word and Object*. 'But in order for there not to have been, it is not necessary that any person who is in fact present in the universe should simply have been missing from it. All that is required is that no one person should have written *Word and Object*' (ibid., p. 78). Well, there is no reason why we should not say a similar thing about the fact. For it not to have been a fact that Carter was president in 1979, it is not required that an entity should have been absent from the universe, only that the entity which actually has the property of being a fact should not have had this property. Consequently, a believer in the identity of facts and true propositions can say this: there exists an entity (*viz*. a proposition) which is both true and which is a fact; and if Carter had not been president in 1979, this proposition would not have been true, and so would not have been a fact; but, crucially, the entity would have existed all the same (ibid., p. 78).

The reply can be put another way.[3] Fine's argument presupposes that 'the fact that Carter was president in 1979' can only be read attributively, and hence that the conditional 'if Carter had not been president in 1979, the fact that Carter was president in 1979 would not have existed' has to be true. But the definite description can also be read *referentially*; and, if it is given this reading, the conditional comes out as false. The *entity* would still have existed; it just would not have had the property of being a fact. And in saying this, we leave room for identifying the

fact with the true proposition. To say that there would not have been such a fact is just to say that the proposition would not have been true.

3.3 Another reason for refusing to identify facts with true thoughts is famously suggested by Austin. Facts, it is claimed, have to be occupants of the world (rather than true thoughts about the world: things from the realm of sense) because facts may be assimilated to *events*: items which are uncontentiously worldly:

> Phenomena, events, situations, states of affairs, are commonly supposed to be genuinely-in-the-world, and even Strawson admits events are so. Yet surely of all of these we can say that they *are facts*. The collapse of the Germans is an event and is a fact. (Austin 1961, p. 104)

Austin's argument is, in effect, this:

(7) The collapse of the Germans was an event.
(8) The collapse of the Germans was a fact.
So (9) The fact is identical with the event.

However, as Zeno Vendler has shown (1967a), this argument commits the fallacy of equivocation. Although both (7) and (8) contain the same morphological sentence nominalization, the respective occurrences of the nominalization actually pick out different things. To realize this, it is enough to use the techniques of transformational grammar. We may start by noting that 'that the Germans collapsed' may replace 'the collapse of the Germans' in (8) but not in (7). We can meaningfully add 'that occurred in 1945' to (7), but we cannot do the same to (8). And we can meaningfully add 'that took place in Europe' to (7) but not (8). Finally, although

(10) The collapse of the Germans was a gradual event

makes perfect sense, the same cannot be said for

(11) The collapse of the Germans was a gradual fact.

Events occur at times, and at places; facts do not. Events can be gradual or prolonged; facts cannot. Consequently, although 'the collapse of the Germans' names an event in (7) and a fact in (8), it does not follow that the event is the fact. As Vendler mischievously puts it, 'Austin's syllogism has four terms' (1967a, p. 142).

At this point, however, an objector might charge me with a double-standard when it comes to linguistic evidence. In §2 I dismissed the linguistic evidence against the identification of facts with true thoughts. Am I not now appealing to the same kind of linguistic evidence in order to argue against the assimilation of facts to events? Actually, the two cases are crucially different. There are three reasons why the linguistic data pointing to the distinctness of facts and true thoughts may be overruled. First of all, there is strong linguistic evidence, uncovered by Strawson, which points to facts being true thoughts: we talk of facts being stated, learned, forgotten, and such like. Second, the linguistic evidence for the distinctness of facts and true thoughts can be explained away. Finally, and crucially, the case for streamlining our ontology by identifying facts with true thoughts is backed by reasons of a more theoretical nature. As we saw in Chapter 1, the major motivation for taking facts to be states of affairs – namely, that facts are truthmakers – is groundless. Furthermore, our neo-Davidsonian account of apparent 'that'-clauses directly supports the idea that the thing which is true is also a fact.

When it comes to the evidence stacked up against Austin's assimilation of facts to events, the situation is very different. All Austin has to offer in favour of the identification is the evidence that we describe the collapse of the Germans as both an event and fact. My reply to this is that this linguistic evidence does not show what Austin takes it to show, and, indeed, that the evidence of transformational grammar points the other way. While the linguistic evidence for facts and true thoughts being distinct can be explained away or trumped by other considerations, the same cannot be said for the linguistic evidence which points to facts being distinct from events. Austin has simply slipped up.

3.4 The objections we have considered up to now have pointed to alleged differences between facts and true thoughts. Other objections are more subtle: they argue that there is a theoretical role played by facts which entails that they have to be construed as states of affairs rather than true thoughts. It is time to consider two of these now.

The first such objection stems from remarks made by Armstrong (1991). Armstrong holds that mereological fusion cannot really unite things, and concludes that the unity in the world must be provided by states of affairs:

> if mereological composition is the only form of composition that there is in the world, then the world has no real unity. The argument

> for this is that when objects form a mereological whole that whole supervenes on those objects. Given *a* and *b* then the whole is there automatically. But such supervenience is, I think, ontologically innocent. It adds nothing to the world that was not there before. . . . That, incidentally, is why it seems proper to take mereological fusion in a permissive fashion so that a given *a* and *b* may be 'things' falling under different categories. The Sydney Opera House and $\sqrt{-1}$ have their fusion.
>
> But if this is so, then it seems that mere mereology never really unites things at all. . . . Really to unite things . . . relations are required . . . So, I argue, the state of affairs of *a*'s being (externally) related to *b* by some *R* is required. (Armstrong 1991, p. 192)

Naturally, if Armstrong is right about this, then the claim that facts are true thoughts is in trouble. For if facts are supposed to do the job of uniting things in the world, they can only be states of affairs. True thoughts are composed of senses, things that stand proxy for worldly entities, and so cannot do the job of uniting things. They are simply the wrong kind of entity to play this role.

However, once the argument is put like this, its unsoundness becomes apparent. Let us grant, for the sake of argument, that mereological fusion does not really unite things, and hence that we need to regard things as standing in relations to other things. Admitting this does not commit us to an ontology containing states of affairs. The crucial point, already noted in Chapter 1, is that a commitment to *a* and *b* instantiating the universal *R* commits us only to *a*, *b* and *R*, not to a state of affairs. A state of affairs is surplus to requirements. Consequently, we are relieved of any pressure to regard facts as states of affairs. Furthermore, the positing of a state of affairs has no explanatory power. Merely saying that *a*, *b* and *R* are unified in a state of affairs does nothing to help us understand *how a* and *b* can instantiate *R*. This is for the simple reason that the supposed unity of states of affairs is itself obscure. As we discovered in Chapter 1, the problem of the nature of instantiation cannot be solved by wheeling in states of affairs; such a move, we have seen, merely replaces one unity problem with another. So, not only is it wrong to think that states of affairs are required to bring unity to the world; it is mysterious how such things could actually do so. And if this is correct, we remain free to regard facts as true thoughts.

3.5 However, the case against the identification of facts and true thoughts is not over yet. Facts are typically regarded as things which

cause and are caused, and this role has often been claimed to be incompatible with their being true thoughts. As A.R. White pithily remarks, '[i]t was the fact, not the true statement, that the train was diverted which made me late for my lecture' (1970, p. 83).[4] To be a cause, so White supposes, an entity must be an item in the world (of reference) rather than a mode of presentation of it. So, if facts are causes and effects, it seems that we must construe this as 'a matter of a certain *state of affairs*, one involving an object's properties and relations, bringing about a further state of affairs' (Armstrong 1991, p. 191, my italics).

If we are to argue soundly from facts being causes to their being entities other than true thoughts, the following two lemmas must hold good: that facts may, indeed, be causes; and that facts can only be causes if they are states of affairs: things with objects and properties as constituents. A quick way with the argument would be to deny the first lemma. We could follow Davidson (1967b) in arguing that sentences which appear to report instances of causation between facts can always be reconstrued in such a way as to suggest that the relata are events. The Davidsonian would reformulate the claim that the train's being diverted (a fact) made me late for my lecture (another fact) as the claim that *my late arrival* (an event) was caused by *the train's diversion* (another event). But it is unclear what such reparsing shows. It certainly does not show that the event-formulated claim is more basic; we could equally reparse from the opposite direction and argue that this illustrates that causal relata are always facts. And, anyway, I think it unnecessarily dogmatic to hold that entities of only one category can enter into causal relations.

Thankfully, such a desperate Davidsonian strategy is not required. It is the second lemma which is false. As we shall see, the thesis that facts are causal relata is *compatible* with a conception of facts as true thoughts. But let us approach this conclusion by first of all uncovering the reason why someone might, in the first place, think that facts, if causes, can only be states of affairs. It would seem to be this: (true) thoughts, being abstract entities, are incapable of exerting force. A (true) thought, in Jonathan Bennett's words, appears to be 'categorially wrong for the role of a puller and shover and twister and bender' (1988, p. 22). But the first question we should ask is whether *any* of the candidates for the relata of the causal relation are better equipped. Let us suppose facts to be states of affairs: complexes of objects and properties. Now the question of what exactly such 'complexes' are like is a difficult one for the friend of states of affairs to answer; nevertheless, given that some of the constituents of states of affairs are themselves supposed to

be abstract, it is hard to resist the idea that states of affairs must be abstract too. But if states of affairs are abstract, then they cannot be pullers and shovers, twisters and benders either.

Actually, as Bennett argues convincingly, events are no better off, even if construed as concrete particulars. Let us suppose that an explosion causes a fire. It is a denial of scientific fact to suppose that it is the *explosion* that emits force and, so to speak, 'acts as the elbow in the ribs' (ibid., p. 23). For

> [w]hen an explosion causes a fire, what happens is that molecules bump into other molecules, increasing their velocity to the point where they react rapidly with the ambient gases, etc. The idea that the pushing is done not by the molecules but by the explosion is just the afterglow of ignorance about what an explosion is. (ibid., p. 23)

What we should *not* conclude from this is that neither events nor facts are causes. We are perfectly entitled to say things like 'the explosion caused the fire', 'the fact that there was an explosion caused the fire' and 'the fact that there was a fire was due to there being an explosion'. The moral must be that facts *and* events can have causes and effects and yet not be the things which emit force and push things around. As Bennett explains, 'in our world the pushing and shoving and forcing are done by *things* – elementary particles and aggregates of them – and not by any relata of the causal relation' (ibid., p. 22). But what this means is that facts may be the relata of the causal relation and yet be true thoughts. An acceptance of the thesis that facts are causal relata does not commit us to any particular view of the nature of facts. In particular, it does not commit us to viewing facts as states of affairs.

However, a lingering worry may remain. For causal contexts have commonly been taken to be transparent. And if this is so, then the entities which are causes and effects must themselves be extensional rather than intensional, which would seem to indicate that the facts which are causes and effects must be states of affairs rather than true thoughts. The following argument put forward by Vendler presses just this point:

> Oedipus knew that he had married Jocasta. What he did not know was that he had married his own mother. Yet, in fact, marrying Jocasta amounted to marrying his mother. Therefore, if it is true that his having married his mother caused the tragedy, then it has to be true (though less illuminating) that his having married Jocasta caused the tragedy. For I agree with Davidson . . . [that] causal contexts, unlike

> propositional ones, are transparent. . . . As Oedipus' sad case shows, it is not enough to say that a fact is a true proposition. The difference goes deeper: facts are referentially transparent; propositions, even true ones, are opaque. (Vendler 1967b, pp. 709–10)

However, I dispute that causal contexts are transparent. Vendler simply states that if we replace 'his mother' with the co-referential 'Jocasta' in

(12) Oedipus' having married his mother caused the tragedy

sameness of truth-value is guaranteed. But there are plenty of cases in which merely swapping co-referential expressions within causal contexts *does* change the resulting sentence's truth-value. If Vendler were right about causal contexts, then from

(13) The tragedy was caused by the fact that Oedipus' wife was his mother

and

(14) The tragedy occurred because Oedipus's wife was his mother

we would be able to deduce

(15) The tragedy was caused by the fact that Oedipus's wife was his wife

and

(16) The tragedy occurred because Oedipus' wife was his wife

respectively. But we cannot. Tragedies cannot be caused by trivial, necessary facts.[5] So here we have clear cases in which reports of a causal relation between facts are intensional. And this should encourage us to reconsider Vendler's own example. For *why* should we say that the tragedy, if caused by Oedipus' marrying his mother, was caused by his marrying Jocasta? This claim is entirely question-begging. The proponent of the view that facts are true thoughts will simply say that only the former fact caused the tragedy. All in all, nothing which Vendler has said need shake the faith of someone who believes facts to be true thoughts, and who, as a result, takes causal contexts to be intensional.

3.6 The final objection that I shall consider is perhaps the most influential of all. It is tempting to suppose that identifying facts with true thoughts would compromise realism by diluting the objectivity of facts. According to this way of thinking, only if facts are states of affairs – things

whose constituents are mind-independent occupants of the realm of reference – can realism be preserved. However, it seems to me that such an objection rests upon either a misunderstanding of the nature of thoughts or a confusion concerning realism.

The misconstrual of the nature of thoughts is evident in remarks such as the following:

> Propositions belong to the people who make or entertain them, but facts are not owned. People *have* opinions; they *conceive*, *nurture*, *entertain*, or *give up* beliefs; they *make* statements, *give* descriptions, and *issue* verdicts. Thus we speak of the witness's statement, the judge's opinion, and the jury's verdict. The facts of the case, however, do not belong to anybody; they are, objectively, 'there' to be found, discovered, or arrived at. (Vendler 1967b, p. 710)

> . . . the fit between facts and truths (or true statements) is not perfect. . . . There were facts before any languages were around with which to utter truths. (Vision 1988, p. 57)

Both extracts take facts, but not thoughts, to be, in Vendler's words, 'objectively, "there" to be found, discovered, or arrived at' (1967b, p. 710). Vendler himself supposes that thoughts are *mind*-dependent in the following way: they cannot, he believes, exist without people to take attitudes towards them. Facts, so he says, need no 'owner'; thoughts do. Vision's charge is slightly different. Presumably, by claiming that facts, but not truths, were around before there were languages, he is supposing that thoughts, but not facts, are *language*-dependent in the following sense: there were facts, but not thoughts, before anyone was able to make any utterances.

Both claims are false. It is noticeable, and hugely ironic, that Frege himself uses the 'ownership' metaphor to explain that thoughts need no thinker in order to exist. A thought, Frege says, needs no owner (1918, p. 45). Thoughts do not depend for their existence upon the people who grasp them. Frege is here insisting upon a crucial distinction which Vendler seems to have neglected: the distinction between an act of thinking and its thinkable propositional content: a thought. An act of thinking, naturally, needs a thinker in order to exist; but the same is not true of the thinkable propositional content of such an act. There is, then, an act/object ambiguity when it comes to the propositional attitudes. It is a truism to say that we talk, for example, of 'the witness's statement'. Vendler's error is to suppose that this way of talking

commits us to the view that the *content* of the witness's act of stating, as opposed to the act itself, is owned by her. Thoughts, like facts, need no owner, so Vendler's opposition to the identification of facts with true thoughts is misplaced.

Of course, as I argued in the previous chapter, the way in which Frege accounts for the mind-independence of thoughts is highly dubious. He takes thoughts to be conceptually independent of language and language-users, treating them as self-subsistent inhabitants of a 'third realm' distinct from both the physical universe and the realm of ideas. But the conception of thoughts as utterance-types which I endorse enables us to account for thoughts being 'there to be found' without our having to regard them as self-subsistent. While it is true that to conceive of a thought is to conceive of an utterance's being of a certain type, it is not true that thoughts depend for their existence upon utterances. An unexpressed thought is just an untokened type of utterance: a kind of utterance that has not yet been made. Here we have a metaphysically moderate way of allowing for the mind-independence which Vendler rightly takes facts to have, but wrongly supposes thoughts to lack.

The conception of thoughts as utterance-types also enables us to refute Vision's claim that no thoughts existed before any words had ever been spoken. The analogy between thoughts and chess moves, familiar from the previous chapter, is again helpful here. In the case of chess moves, it is harmless to say that the various possible moves existed even before the game had been invented and any examples of the pieces had been made. For a move in chess, though necessarily a move made by a piece, does not depend for its existence upon the existence of pieces. *A way of moving a piece* exists before any pieces do. This being so, there is no conceptual barrier to saying that utterance-types existed before there were any utterances. The thought that *p* is, as I said in the previous chapter, a possible move in the language-game; and such a possible move exists before the invention of the words which we use to make that move. The dependence of thoughts upon utterances, like that of chess moves upon pieces, is *conceptual* rather than *existential*.

The moral is this: (true) thoughts are as language-independent and mind-independent as they need to be in order to be facts. That thoughts inhabit the realm of sense, and not the realm of reference, does not impugn them on this score. To identify facts with true thoughts is not to abandon our realist intuitions concerning the facts.

However, an objector may still feel dissatisfied. For she may, none the less, think that realism requires that facts be viewed according to the

correspondence theorist: as states of affairs occupying the realm of reference. As Graeme Forbes puts it,

> correspondence theories are often associated with realism: to say that truth for sentences in some area of discourse consists in correspondence to the facts is to commit oneself to there being 'facts of the matter' in that area . . . The notion of facts *or states of affairs* [my italics] appears to have realistic conceptions built into it. Fact talk carries with it a certain picture of the world as a fixed structure to which sentient beings are related epistemically. The idea of objectivity is then the idea that our epistemic relations to this structure may be in some fortuitous – or perhaps even systematic – way, awry: here the idea of a realm of facts is the basic one in terms of which we make sense of the thought that something could be true even though our best investigative procedures tell us it is false. (Forbes 1986, pp. 37–8)

Crispin Wright, though a famous critic of realism, makes the same conceptual link between realism and the construal of facts as states of affairs. According to Wright, '[r]ealism . . . evidently intends a conception of truth that should be understood along the line traditionally favoured by "correspondence" theorists' (Wright 1988, p. 35), a conception which he later explains as involving 'the idea of a state of affairs . . . being the *source* of the truth of the sentence – the idea of a state of affairs transmitting a truth value, as it were, across a substantial relation, the converse of correspondence' (Wright 1992, pp. 26–7).

But why suppose realism to be connected with the conception of facts as states of affairs? Wright appears to think that the realist regards a state of affairs as the 'source' of the truth of a sentence (or thought), but quite why the realist should feel obliged to take this line is left unexplained. For one thing, the truthmaker principle, as we saw in Chapter 1, is a piece of philosophical mythology. For another, it is difficult to see what realism has to do with the truthmaker principle and its consequent conception of facts as states of affairs. For if a commitment to 'realism' is a commitment to the view that linguistic things are correlated with mind-independent items from the real world – the realm of reference – then the denial that facts inhabit the realm of reference does nothing to threaten it. All that is being denied is that the realm of reference includes items corresponding to complete thoughts. The things left in the realm of reference (objects, properties and events, presumably) are left just where they were. The refusal to countenance complete thoughts being correlated with anything worldly does not preclude us

from taking there to be relations between language and a mind-independent real world at a sub-sentential level.

Up to now, I have been assuming that realism is an *ontological* thesis to the effect that certain kinds of entity exist and are mind-independent. Some prefer to think of realism as a doctrine concerning *truth*: in essence, that a thought's truth-value is in no part determined by our recognitional capacities, and hence may transcend them. But even if realism is understood in this second way, it none the less remains quite unclear why such a realist should suppose facts to be states of affairs, as opposed to true thoughts. To be sure, the realist about truth holds that the truth-value of a thought is solely determined by what the proposition says and how things are. As Wright has put it, '[t]ruth-values are, so to speak, ground out on the interface between language and reality' (1988, p. 28). But this only commits us to the idea that the truth-value of <*a* is *F*> depends on nothing more than whether *a* really is *F*. No reason has been given as to why *a's really being F* should be itself be thought of as a state of affairs: a thing with *a* and *F* as constituents. To reiterate a conclusion from Chapter 1, we can agree that for <*a* is *F*> to be true, *a* must instantiate *F*, and yet hold back from treating the instantiation of *F* by *a* as *itself* an entity. This being so, a realist is free to harmlessly identify the fact that *a* is *F* with the true thought.

'Realism', however, is a notoriously malleable word. Perhaps our objector means realism about a given subject-matter to be neither an ontological thesis, nor a thesis concerning truth, but a thesis concerning *judgment*: namely, that the judgments we make on the subject-matter in question are apt to record, or misrecord, genuine features of the real world. Just what this means is a matter of some dispute, but Wright has an interesting suggestion (1992, ch. 4). He supposes that for a discourse to be realistic, for our judgments to be 'genuinely factual', it must be the case that the facts our judgments express are genuinely *discoverable*. Our judgments cannot determine the facts; rather, certain opinions must be *commanded* of us because that is how things are. (That is to say, a failure to hold certain opinions must be explicable only in terms of epistemological imperfection.)

This account of what is at stake in debates as to realism is, I think, of great insight and importance. What it does not do, however, is commit the realist to facts being states of affairs. The facts discovered could equally well be conceived as true thoughts, provided thoughts are objective entities which do not need an owner in order to exist. And this is just the view of thoughts which I have been recommending. Thoughts, although conceptually dependent upon utterances, are none

the less existentially independent of both thinkers and language; and so we may say that there were thoughts both before there were thinkers and before anyone used words. Consequently, the identification of facts with true thoughts does not compromise realism with respect to the facts. Facts, as true thoughts, are objective entities all right; they are just occupants of the realm of sense rather than the realm of reference.

4. W(h)ither facts?: Rundle's attempted de-reification

If it is granted that facts are entities, we should regard them as true thoughts. Our arguments for identifying facts with true thoughts stand, and the objections to doing so have been rebutted. But *should* we grant that facts are entities in the first place? Perhaps the identification of facts with true thoughts fails, not because facts are entities of some other kind, but because they are not entities at all. Such a line has been taken by Bede Rundle (1979, 1993), and I shall spend this section and the next considering his arguments.

The case for including facts in our ontology is a powerful one: we appear to refer to facts unproblematically. Typically, the main referring-expressions naming facts are considered to be 'that'-clauses and other sentence nominalizations synonymous with them.[6] For example, it is usually supposed that the 'that'-clause in

(17) That I was late returning home annoyed Eleanor

and the sentence nominalization in

(18) My being late returning home annoyed Eleanor

refer to the same fact. Of course, this account does not cohere with the view of sentences in *oratio obliqua*, and of sentences containing seeming-'that'-clauses quite generally, which I recommend. According to that view, semantically speaking, there are no 'that'-clauses at all: sentences containing 'that' followed by a sentence should be analyzed paratactically. I shall return to the paratactic approach presently. For the moment, it is enough to see that this dispute over logical form in no way undermines the idea that facts are sometimes the referents of our words. For, according to the paratactic analysis, the logical form of (17) will be represented as

(19) I was late returning home. Annoyed (that, Eleanor),

in which the job of referring to the fact (= true thought) is done by the demonstrative 'that'. This reveals the apparent reference to facts by

sentence nominalizations to be a case of something with which we are quite familiar: the reference to facts by demonstratives, as in

(20) I was late returning home. That is why Eleanor was annoyed.

But the evidence in favour of an ontology of facts does not stop here. Facts also seem to be referred to by pronouns, as in

(21) I was late returning home, which annoyed Eleanor,

and we appear to quantify over facts. From (17), for example, we can infer

(22) Something annoyed Eleanor.

Finally, of course, once we have referred to a fact using a demonstrative or pronoun, we may go on to describe it as such. In

(23) I was late returning home. That is a fact,

'that' seems to refer to something which is then described as a fact.

In spite of this evidence, Rundle none the less denies that 'there must be *something* to which "a fact" may be applied, *something* thus describable' (1979, p. 339). His recommendation is that '"fact" . . . not be considered true of anything' (1993, p. 13). Before we go on to consider the success (or otherwise) of his attempt to explain away our apparent ontology of facts, it will be useful to see how he initially motivates such a project. Two considerations are significant. First, Rundle appeals to what he takes to be the illocutionary act performed when sentences containing the words 'is a fact' are uttered. According to Rundle, this phrase is used for 'emphatic affirmation' rather than description (ibid., p. 12). So the difference between uttering

(24) It is a fact that I was late returning home,

and

(25) I was late returning home,

is that in uttering (24) a distinctive speech act is performed: namely, that of signalling that one has a good warrant for taking (25) to be true. As a result, Rundle supposes 'is a fact' to have a function akin to the assertion sign (1979, p. 332). Second, Rundle believes that we are compelled to deny that facts are entities, once we have considered the available accounts of what such entities are supposed to be like. As Rundle sees it, if facts are entities, then they are either states of affairs or true propositions; but, he claims, both accounts are untenable. For this reason, Rundle comes to think that perhaps 'a relevant misconception is shared

by the various factions' (ibid., p. 313), namely that 'is a fact' describes any entity at all. In Rundle's view, while our everyday talk of facts is beyond reproach, such talk does not commit us to facts being entities of any kind:

> [T]he consideration of prime importance is that in stating that such-and-such is a fact we are not describing anything, whether in language or in the world. Our task is not to make sense of some unfathomable entity, but in so far as there is a problem it is one of knowing when we are entitled to proclaim something a fact. (1993, pp. 21–2)

I shall return to the question of Rundle's motivation for his position in the next section. For now, we need to see how, armed with his scepticism concerning the available attempts to explain what *sort* of entity a fact is, he tries to explain away the linguistic evidence that a fact is an entity *at all*.

The sentences which Rundle supposes to provide the greatest obstacle to his account are those such as

(26) That I was late returning home is a fact,

in which it looks like the 'that'-clause names a fact and the predicate describes it. Taking the bull by the horns, Rundle makes two negative claims about sentences such as (26). First, he denies that the 'that'-clause names anything. As he puts it, 'a noun clause is surely a most implausible contender for the role of referring to something' (ibid., p. 14); and '[a]lthough clauses appear . . . plausible claimants to genuine subjecthood, . . . it is form rather than function that is satisfied by their appearance in subject position' (1979, p. 321). His second negative claim is that 'is a fact' is not a genuine predicate. Its function is not to describe something, let alone to say what sort of thing something is (1993, p. 12). The word '"fact" does not function predicatively' (1979, p. 332). Rundle himself tends to run these two negative theses together. Indeed, he presents his central thesis as simply that '"is a fact" is not true of anything whatsoever' (1993, p. 12). It is easy to see how this conflation could occur: if one thought that the only candidate for reference in (26) were the 'that'-clause, a denial that the 'that'-clause refers would go a long way towards undermining the view of 'is a fact' as a genuine predicate. However, the emended paratactic account of sentences containing apparent 'that'-clauses indicates that the two negative claims should be kept separate. The first is true, but the second is, most definitely, false. As we shall see, (26), if true, involves

reference to a fact, but this reference is made by means of the demonstrative 'that'.

What, then, does Rundle propose for sentences such as (26)? We should begin by clarifying the nature of his project. What Rundle aims to provide us with is something amounting to a logical form proposal (or, at least, the beginnings of such) for sentences containing 'is a fact', together with an account of the speech acts we perform when uttering them. Taking what he likes to regard as a Wittgensteinian approach to the philosophy of language (1979, p. vii), Rundle would not depict what he is doing in this way. But it is notable that he describes his suggested reparsings of sentences as 'aim[ing] to provide a deductive equivalent which shows more perspicuously the implications of the original' (ibid., p. 314), a description which is strikingly reminiscent of claims made by philosophers working more self-consciously within the tradition of giving the logical forms of kinds of sentence.[7]

Having set the scene, we can take a look at what amounts to Rundle's logical form proposal for (26). The first step is to regard (26) as an inversion of

(27) It is a fact that I was late returning home,

with ellipsis of 'it' (ibid., p. 313). The second step is a claim about the 'it' in (27): this is supposed by Rundle to be a *dummy* pronoun: something designed to keep up the appearance of the sentence's having a grammatical subject, but which does not genuinely function as an anticipatory referring-expression (Rundle 1993, p. 16). Nevertheless, an objector is likely to think that 'is a fact' in (27) describes something named by 'that I was late returning home', so Rundle has to say a little more. This takes the form of a claim about the role of 'that' in (27). Rather than supposing 'that' to take a sentence to form a name, or following Davidson in reading it as a demonstrative, Rundle supposes it to have the function of a comma, dash or colon (1979, p. 286): something which links two parts of the sentence together. As a result, Rundle treats (27) 'not as a predication, but as a co-ordination of the two clauses which it comprises' (1993, p. 16), and thus represents his account of (27), and hence (26), as

(28) It is a fact: I was late returning home.

Consequently, in Rundle's eyes, the representation of (26) and (27) as (28) serves to illustrate that neither (26) nor (27) involves reference to a fact. 'It' is only a dummy pronoun, whilst the function of 'that' as a co-ordinator is represented by the colon in (28).

Naturally, Rundle acknowledges that the inference from (26) to

(29) Something is a fact

is valid; but because the 'that'-clause which the quantifier replaces is not a referring-expression, it follows that (29) does not involve quantification over objects of any kind (1993, p. 17).[8]

The representation of (26) as (28) embodies the two negative claims that we saw Rundle make about (26): the sentence does not, properly speaking, contain a 'that'-clause; and 'is a fact' does not function predicatively. Indeed, if Rundle is correct, the non-predicative function of 'is a fact' is akin to the adverbial construction 'in fact', and he thus seeks to illuminate (28) by comparing it with

(30) I was in fact late returning home.

Whilst (28) is (whether he would describe it in this way or not) the beginnings of a logical form proposal for (26), (30) is supposed to be a gloss which sheds light on 'is a fact': 'is a fact' and the adverbial 'in fact' are not, he says, equivalent (ibid., p. 333), but comparing the former with the latter nicely enables us to see that 'with "fact" . . . we are introducing a qualification into the mode of affirmation, giving a further determination of its character rather than drawing attention to a feature that is true of the clause or of something this designates' (1993, p. 16).

5. A response to Rundle

Rundle's attempt to do away with an ontology of facts is, I believe, a failure. His logical form proposal for (26) is both in itself inadequate and poorly motivated. Here is why.

As we saw in §4, when it comes to a sentence such as

(26) That I was late returning home is a fact,

Rundle denies both that the 'that'-clause is a referring-expression and that 'is a fact' functions as a predicate. His positive proposal represents (26) as equivalent to

(27) It is a fact that I was late returning home,

which he represents, in turn, as

(28) It is a fact: I was late returning home,

in which 'it' functions as a dummy pronoun, rather than as a referring-expression, and in which the co-ordinating role of 'that' is represented

by the colon. But my objection is this: once (27) is represented as (28), in which no reference to a fact is made either by 'that' or by a complete 'that'-clause, Rundle's non-referential reading of 'it' becomes literally incredible.

Why deny that the 'it' in (28) is a genuine referring-expression? When we come face-to-face with sentences of the form 'It is F' we naturally take such sentences to comprise a referring-expression and a predicate, so why we should we believe this case to be an exception? True enough, according to my own Davidsonian account, the logical form of

(27) It is a fact that I was late returning home

is represented as

(31) Fact (that). I was late returning home,

and such an account regards the 'it' in (27) as something which just has the grammatical appearance of a singular term. But the reason why the Davidsonian (unlike Rundle) is free to regard 'it' in (27) as a dummy is that he takes the entity apparently referred to by 'it' to be actually demonstrated by 'that'. Given the view of 'that' as a demonstrative, there is simply no semantic need served by treating 'it' as referring to the same thing. However, once Rundle has decided against regarding either 'that' or the 'that'-clause as referential in (27), pressure is thereby placed on him to regard the occurrence of 'it' as a genuine referring-expression. Because Rundle takes no other expression in (27) to refer to the entity seemingly referred to by 'it', 'It is a fact' in (28) just looks like a standard name/predicate construction.

This being so, Rundle's (28) itself invites reinterpretation as a mere notational variant of the Davidsonian (31), with 'it' playing the role of the demonstrative 'that' and with the colon transformed into a period. Nothing of consequence hangs on whether the Davidsonian represents the logical form of (26) and (27) as (31) or

(32) Fact (it). I was late returning home.

The standard paratactic story has it that the demonstrative is 'that', but a Davidsonian who concurred with Rundle's denial that 'that' is referential could, with justification, regard (32) as correct. All that really matters for the Davidsonian account is that the content-sentence is treated as a semantically discrete entity and that reference to its utterance (or, better, to the proposition expressed by its utterance) is made by a demonstrative.

My point is this: regarding 'It' as a dummy pronoun in (27) can only be plausible if some other expression takes over the function of referring to the entity apparently referred to by 'it'. And because no other expression in (28) – Rundle's analysis of (27) – can act in this way, Rundle's view of 'it' as a dummy pronoun in (28) is implausible. However, Rundle is well aware of the counter-intuitiveness of his non-referential reading of 'it' in (28), and he seeks to make his claim more palatable by presenting other examples in which 'it' does not function as a referring-expression (1979, pp. 314–18). His thinking seems to be that if we can agree that 'it' occasionally functions other than as a referring-expression, we will be prepared to countenance its doing so in (28). But, of course, this strategy will only work if the 'it' in (28) is sufficiently akin to the cases in which 'it' is uncontroversially non-referential. And it is here that Rundle runs into trouble once again.

There is little doubt that some occurrences of 'it' are non-referential. The pronoun does not have reference in sentences such as these:

(33) It is raining.
(34) It is more comfortable in the sitting room.
(35) It is unsafe in the city at night.

If we consider (33), we can see immediately that no reference is intended. The problem with trying to assign a reference to 'it' in (33) is not simply that no object seems to fit the bill (although this is, of course, true), but that the whole enterprise of searching for a reference for the word is misconceived. This much is clear, if we appreciate two facts: that to ask *which* thing is raining is silly or somehow inappropriate; and that not even 'something' is substitutable for 'it' (ibid., p. 317) in (33). But why should we suppose that (28) falls into the same category as (33)? For to ask *which* thing is a fact is not obviously inappropriate, and 'something' plainly *is* substitutable for the pronoun in (28). This evidence suggests that there is a clear dissimilarity between the pronouns in (28) and (33), and hence that Rundle's only sound motivation for denying a reference to 'it' in (28) could be that no candidate for occupying the role of referent seems to be quite up to the job. We should now consider this crucial claim.

Rundle's analysis of (26) and (27) as (28) is, he admits, 'at first hard to accept' (1979, p. 320). But he supposes that the initial counter-intuitiveness of his proposal will be outweighed by its avoidance of any commitment to an ontology of facts. Indeed, the major rationale for Rundle's account, as he himself sees it, consists in such ontological parsimony.

In this respect, it is interesting to note how the argument of his (1993) is structured. The chapter begins with attacks on the two alternative conceptions of facts: as states of affairs and true propositions respectively (pp. 9–12). It is only *after* the two rival accounts of facts have been undermined that Rundle introduces his own recommendation:

> But if facts are neither in language nor in the world, what is left for them? One radical possibility is this: the phrase 'is a fact' *is not true of anything whatsoever*. This would explain in the most decisive fashion why each of these attempts to pin facts down has come to nothing, the expression being impossible to anchor, either to anything within language or to anything outside it. (Rundle 1993, p. 12)

Rundle's dialectic is this: facts can be neither states of affairs nor true propositions; but these exhaust the possibilities when it comes to the nature of facts; so we have a compelling reason to explore the possibility that facts are not entities at all.

However, once it is put like this, we can see how weak Rundle's motivation really is. For while the case against facts being states of affairs is strong, the same cannot be said for the case against facts being true thoughts. The major objections to this identification were discussed, and dismissed, in §3 above, and Rundle's own reasons for rejecting the account of facts as true thoughts contain nothing new. Two features dominate his discussion. First, he misconstrues the nature of propositions, supposing them to be linguistic items: that is, sentences. Only this reading can make sense of his claim that propositions, but not facts, 'may be in English . . . [and] contain terms referring to persons and things' (1993, p. 12). Two things need to be said in reply to this. To begin with, according to the view of thoughts which I recommend, they are things *expressed* by (utterances of) sentences, and there is no absurdity in supposing facts to be similarly expressible in language. Second, if, as I believe, thoughts are utterance-types, it is simply false to say that thoughts contain 'terms referring to persons and things'. Thoughts, on my view, contain the senses of utterance-fragments: things which are to utterance-fragments as utterance-types are to utterances. As we came to appreciate in Chapter 3, §5, the constituents of (neo-Fregean) thoughts are *sense-expression-types* (Harcourt 1993, p. 308).

The second notable feature of Rundle's attack on the claim that facts are true thoughts is its methodology. It clearly fits the category of objection which I considered in §2 above: an appeal to ordinary language-differences in the application of 'fact' and 'true proposition' (or 'true

thought'). But such an appeal is of no use on its own. If such linguistic evidence can be explained away, and if we find good theoretical reasons for identifying facts with true thoughts, we can surely come to regard ordinary language as in this case embodying philosophical error. As I argued in §2, appealing to our everyday usage of words is only one piece of philosophical evidence; and, in my view, the sort of evidence uncovered by Rundle is trumped by the philosophical arguments which conflict with it.

The moral of all this is that Rundle's reluctance to include facts in our ontology, and the semantic proposal which embodies this reluctance, are inadequately motivated. They could only have satisfactory motivation if he could demonstrate that facts are not true thoughts; but this he cannot do.

This, of course, does not mean that we should view the referring-expression in

(26) That I was late returning home is a fact

as the 'that'-clause. As we noted in Chapter 2, §3.3, 'that'-clauses cannot be accommodated by a truth-theoretic, compositional semantics. But not to worry, for we can bring to bear once more the paratactic account of sentences containing (apparent) 'that'-clauses, and have the reference to a fact made by a demonstrative. This way, both (26) and (27) can be viewed as equivalent to

(23) I was late returning home. That is a fact,

their logical form being represented, via a harmless inversion, as

(31) Fact (that). I was late returning home.

The demonstrative 'that' in (31) refers to the thought expressed by the content-sentence (not to the utterance of the sentence); and, presuming the content-sentence to be true, this means that the demonstrated entity is a fact.

This account has plenty to recommend it. First of all, it obviously coheres with the paratactic approach to sentences containing (apparent) 'that'-clauses that I have recommended. Second, unlike the suggestion that reference to the fact is made by a 'that'-clause, the paratactic approach I recommend enables sentences such as (26) and (27) to be incorporated within a compositional, truth-theoretic semantics. There is no suggestion that 'I was late returning home' has a different semantics when following 'that' to when it functions as an ordinary sentence. Since the content-sentence does not combine with 'that' to form the

name of a thought (reference to the thought being made by the demonstrative in the semantically independent sentence which precedes it), we are placed under no pressure to regard the content-sentence as changing its semantics when preceded by 'that'.

The third consideration in favour of the account I suggest is that it smoothly assimilates cases in which reference to a fact appears to be made by a 'that'-clause to cases in which such reference is achieved by means of demonstratives. As we have seen,

(26) That I was late returning home is a fact

is revealed to have the same logical form as

(23) I was late returning home. That is a fact.

This neat, unified theory may be compared with what Rundle has to say about cases such as (23). Acknowledging that 'the case for reference [is] stronger with "that" than with "it"' (1979, p. 334), Rundle is forced into trying to explain away the powerfully intuitive thought that 'that is a fact', like other sentences of the form 'that is *F*', consists of a demonstrative and a predicate, and hence commits us to an ontology of facts. This he does by suggesting that (23) is of a type with cases such as the following, in which, he argues, 'that' is not used to refer to something:

(36) That's a pity. Eleanor has fallen over again.
(37) That's funny. I'd swear I'd left my keys on the table.

His view of such sentences is this: rather than 'that' naming a (true) thought and 'is a pity', or 'is funny', describing it, the whole construction, 'that is a pity' or 'that is funny', functions as a reaction to the statement that follows it. As Rundle himself puts it, 'that is funny'

> may be a response evoked or induced by a statement, and its appropriateness is recognized by having regard to the sense of the statement, taken in conjunction with the speaker's expectations, but it need not in addition be *about* this statement, or anything which the statement introduces. (1979, p. 315)

And his idea is that 'that is a fact' functions analogously: as a device for emphasizing things said:

> The behaviour of 'that is a fact' is again comparable, this being a comment we may make with reference to one statement rather than another, even though a statement cannot be described as 'a fact'.

> Similarly, in so far as we might wish to speak of *identifying* a fact, it will be a matter of one proposition among others intended as factual. So, 'That fact – I mean the fact that imports are rising – is cause for concern'. (1979, p. 334)

But this introduces a whole new level of implausibility, since the cases which are supposed to be unproblematic examples of the non-referential 'that' turn out to be nothing of the sort. When it comes to (36), Rundle's contention is that the fact (= true thought) expressed by 'Eleanor has fallen over again' is not the right sort of thing to *be* a pity, and that, similarly, there is no suitable object available to serve as the referent of 'that' in (37). But the failure to find referents for the demonstratives in (36) and (37) only lasts as long as some of the other words are inadequately analyzed. It does indeed sound odd to describe a fact as a pity. But for something to *be* a pity is, presumably, for it to be such as to merit, or properly evoke, a feeling of pity; and surely the fact that Eleanor has fallen over can do this. Likewise, when it comes to (37), rather than denying that the 'that' demonstrates anything, and hence taking 'that is a fact' to function differently to other sentences of the form 'that is *F*', it is surely preferable to regard 'I'd swear I'd left my keys on the table' as, in this case, *implicating*, rather than expressing, the fact demonstrated by the demonstrative in 'That is funny'. This implicated fact is surely the fact that the speaker's keys are not on the table; and it clearly makes sense to say of this fact that it is 'funny'. For in saying that the fact is funny, one is saying that it cannot satisfactorily be explained.

If Rundle cannot make a case for 'that' in (36) and (37) being non-referential, then he cannot make good his claim that it is also non-referential in (23). So, bereft of an adequate motivation or argument to the contrary, we should continue to follow our intuitions and treat 'that is a fact' at face value: as comprising a demonstrative and a predicate. Naturally, if we do this, then my account of the semantics of (23), and with it (26) and (27), is to be preferred to Rundle's.

But what of Rundle's claim about the point of 'is a fact': his claim that we use 'is a fact' for emphatic affirmation? Does this not suggest that 'is a fact' is non-predicative? To be sure, Rundle believes that once it is pointed out that 'is a fact' has the role of signalling one's belief that one's opinion is warranted, the thesis that 'is a fact' is a genuine predicate – an expression with a descriptive function – is immediately ruled out. (This is implicit in his suggestion that, in uttering 'that *p* is a fact', one *either* describes an item specified by the 'that'-clause *or* makes an

emphatic affirmation (1993, p. 12).) But this is a *non sequitur*, since it fails to address the possibility that 'is a fact' may *both* be used to perform the sort of illocutionary act he outlines *and* to describe something (a thought or statement). Indeed, a plausible account of what goes on in such utterances is this: one signals one's agreement with something said *by* describing it as a fact. Far from being mutually exclusive, the two accounts are complementary. And if this is correct, then any lingering allure had by Rundle's account is swiftly dissipated.

6. Conclusion

Facts are entities, and the only entities they can be are true thoughts. Correspondence theorists thus see two things where there is only one. When a thought is true, it *is* a fact. The things that correspondence theorists take to correspond are actually *identical*. These remarks nicely sum up what is wrong with correspondence theories of truth. But, more than this, they point us towards the kind of identity theory of truth which it is the business of this book to recommend. The nature of such an identity theory will be explored in the next chapter.

Notes

1. Ramon M. Lemos makes this point with admirable clarity (1984, p. 530).
2. When it comes to the question of the nature of facts, Strawson's prime concern seems to be to repudiate the claim that facts are concrete. Indeed, immediately after claiming that facts are things stated, rather than things described, by true statements, Strawson elucidates by remarking that facts 'are not, like things or happenings on the face of the globe, witnessed or seen, broken or overturned, interrupted or prolonged, kicked, destroyed, mended or noisy' (1950, p. 38). Strawson's denial that facts are 'in the world' is simply a denial that they are in the *spatio-temporal* world.

   But that a correspondence theorist may *also* deny that facts are in the spatio-temporal world illustrates that Strawson has failed to put his finger on the correspondence theorist's distinctive conception of facts. As we noted in Chapter 1, the correspondence theorist's defining claim about facts is, *not* that facts are concrete, but that facts are truthmakers. The correspondence theorist is, indeed, wrong about facts; but his error consists in a failure to see that the supposed truthmaker is, in reality, nothing but the true thought itself.
3. For this way of presenting the reply, see Barwise (1988, pp. 227–8).
4. This is also one of Searle's main objections to taking facts to be true thoughts. As Searle (1988, p. 389) puts it,

facts can function causally in a way that true statements cannot. Consider: 'The fact that Napoleon recognized the danger to his left flank, caused him to move his troops forward.' You cannot make a parallel claim about the true statement. The true statement that Napoleon recognized the danger to his left flank, didn't cause anything.

Other philosophers who claim that the facts, because they are causes, cannot be true thoughts, include Richard Kirkham (1992, p. 138), Gerald Vision (1988, p. 57) and Stewart Candlish (1999a, note 8).

5. These examples are of the same style as those offered by Mellor (1987, p. 121).
6. For a clear expression of this view, see Bennett (1988, Chs. 1, 2).
7. Rundle's claim for this reparsing seems to be of a kind with that offered by Davidson. According to Davidson (1969, pp. 94–5), to give the logical form of a sentence is to explain what these familiar words are *doing* here. More precisely, '[t]o know the logical form of a sentence is to know, in the context of a comprehensive theory, the semantic roles of the significant features of the sentence' (1967c, p. 146). Rundle may dispute the 'in the context of a comprehensive theory', but, this aside, he is going in for the same sort of project as Davidson when it comes to sentences which appear to commit us ontologically to facts.
8. Rundle here seems to follow Prior (1971) in his non-objectual, yet non-substitutional, reading of propositional quantification. For a critique of this view, see Chapter 2, §3.1 above.

5
From Correspondence to Identity

1. Modest and robust identity theories

A fact is a thought that is true: an item from the realm of sense. This was the conclusion of the previous chapter; and now that this conclusion has been reached, we can offer a final, neat reply to any correspondence theorist. Facts are not states of affairs which make thoughts true. The supposed truthmaker is the truthbearer. The relation holding between a true thought and a fact is not that of *correspondence* – a relation which holds between an entity and *something else* – but that of *identity*.

This being so, if a philosopher, transfixed by the truthmaker principle, says something to the effect that

(C) <*p*> is true if and only if <*p*> corresponds to a fact,

we can reply by saying that, facts being what they are, he is only entitled to say that

(I) <*p*> is true if and only if <*p*> is *identical* with a fact.

In seeing what is wrong with correspondence theories, we thereby commit ourselves to a position which I wish to call an *identity theory of truth*. However, the identity theory which we have ended up with is, I must stress, *modest* rather than *robust*.[1] An understanding of this distinction is crucial, if the position I am defending is to be adequately understood.

The distinction between robust and modest identity theories of truth turns on their respective conceptions of facts. On the one hand, there is the modest line I recommend: propositions are construed as thoughts, and facts are identified with thoughts that are true. The resulting identity theory is best described as 'modest' because, in its denial that facts

are 'full-blooded denizens of the real world' (Dummett 1973, p. 153), it repudiates the idea that true propositions as a whole, in addition to their sub-propositional constituents, have worldly relata. For the modest identity theorist, language/world relations are entirely sub-sentential.

A robust identity theorist, on the other hand, takes facts to be states of affairs: things with objects and properties as constituents. Such an identity theory is appropriately labelled 'robust' because it preserves the idea, present in correspondence theories, that true propositions – in addition to their parts – have worldly relata. A robust identity theorist agrees with the correspondence theorist that each true proposition stands in a relation to a state of affairs; she departs from correspondence theories by taking the relation in question to be that of identity. If the robust identity theorist is correct, a true proposition *is* a chunk of reality.

Needless to say, the two rival kinds of identity theory are motivated in different ways. Both reject correspondence theories, but for contrasting reasons. As we have seen already, a modest identity theorist, because she regards propositions as thoughts, and because she is unimpressed by the idea of truthmaking, sees no good reason to suppose facts to be states of affairs rather than true thoughts. When it comes to robust identity theories, however, the motivations are of a different kind altogether. In fact, as we shall see in Chapter 7 below, there are *two* varieties of robust identity theory, each with its own accompanying motivation. The resulting robust identity theories look the same: according to both, facts and true propositions are states of affairs. However, their different *routes* to the same destination (starting with the concept of a proposition and the concept of a fact respectively) reveal differences in motivation.

If, like Moore (1899, 1902) and Russell (1903, 1904b) at around the beginning of the last century, one's starting-point is a conception of *propositions* as states of affairs, then one's motivation for replacing a correspondence theory with a robust identity theory is simple: given this conception of propositions, there is nothing else for a fact to *be* but a true proposition.[2] The true proposition and the correspondence theorist's fact are one and the same state of affairs. If, by contrast, one starts with a conception of *facts* as states of affairs, one may seek to identify true propositions with such states of affairs for another reason: because one wishes to close an 'ontological gap' between thought and the world (of states of affairs).[3]

There is much more to say on the subject of the distinction between robust and modest identity theories of truth, and I hope to cover the main points of interest in due course. For the time being, it should be

noted that identity theories have not had a good press. Most contemporary authors have ignored them,[4] while those who have considered them have tended to dismiss them with a flourish.[5] Significantly, however, discussion of identity theories has tended to concentrate on robust theories alone: the case for their modest counterpart has not been made successfully.[6] The point of the present chapter is to put this right. To this end, in the next section I shall briefly, and favourably, contrast the modest identity theory with robust identity theories. In §3, during the course of defending the thesis that Frege agreed with everything the modest identity theory says, I shall clear up some potential misunderstandings as to its nature. Finally, in §4, I shall defend the modest identity theory against the charge of triviality or vacuousness.

2. Robust identity theories rejected

A robust identity theorist takes the fact that *a* is *F* and the true proposition that *a* is *F* to be one and the same state of affairs: the instantiation of *F* by *a*. She does not repudiate the correspondence theorist's conception of facts as worldly entities; she merely claims that true propositions are identical with, rather than correspond to, such things. However, in the light of the arguments of previous two chapters, we now know that states of affairs are ill-suited for both roles. That the robust identity theorist is wrong to view *facts* as states of affairs should be obvious by now. Although she does not commit the error of taking facts to be truthmakers, she is none the less mistaken in supposing facts to be complexes of worldly items. The moral of Chapter 4 was that there are powerful arguments for taking facts to be true thoughts, arguments which outweigh the weak counter-arguments for regarding facts as states of affairs. If the correspondence theorist errs in taking facts to be occupants of the realm of reference, this mistake cannot be put right by identifying true propositions with such items. We must stop projecting facts onto the realm of reference, and put them in the realm of sense where they belong.

Neither can states of affairs serve as *propositions*, for the simple reason that such an account of propositions is unable to leave room for a proposition's being *false*. As we noted in Chapter 3, a proposition cannot contain as constituents the items which it is about: thus construed, the unity of a proposition can only guarantee its truth. According to the conception of propositions as states of affairs, the proposition that *a* bears *R* to *b* can only be unified if *R* really relates *a* and *b* (in that order). The entities *a*, *b* and *R* can only be unified into a proposition by virtue of being unified *in fact*. But if the entities' being unified in fact is a

necessary condition for their being unified into a proposition, it follows that *a*, *b* and *R* cannot be unified into a proposition without this unity actually being found in reality. In other words, the constituents of a proposition can only be unified, and hence form a proposition proper, if the proposition is true. If propositions are states of affairs, a unified proposition is automatically a true one.

In the light of these problems, the correct response is that made by a modest identity theorist. We should simply exile states of affairs from our ontology and let thoughts take their place. If propositions are construed as thoughts rather than states of affairs, room is made for a proposition's being unified and yet false. A false thought, like a true one, has modes of presentation of worldly entities, rather than those entities themselves, as constituents. And while this does not *explain* just how a thought differs from a mere list, it *does* mean that the unity of a thought (however this is to be explained) need not thereby guarantee the actual unity of the entities the thought is about. Furthermore, as we saw in Chapter 3, §3, viewing the contents of utterances and propositional attitudes as thoughts also enables us to make better sense of the subjects of interpretation. With this conception of propositions as thoughts in place, we are then free to identify facts with true thoughts. *Both* propositions *and* facts are thoughts: there is no role left for states of affairs to play.

3. Frege and the modest identity theory

3.1 One might wonder whether anyone has ever held the position that I have christened the *modest identity theory*.[7] I believe that Frege committed himself to such a theory even though he did not present it as such, and even though there is more to his view of truth than his commitment to what the modest identity theory has to say. The evidence is there in black and white. Upon asking 'What is a fact?', Frege can only reply that '[a] fact is a thought that is true' (1918, p. 35); so it follows that, for Frege, truth cannot consist in correspondence. As Dummett explains,

> Facts, as true thoughts, . . . belong, not to the realm of reference, but to that of sense. We therefore cannot say that a thought is true just in case it corresponds to a fact: if it is true, then it just *is* a fact, and there are no two things between which a comparison has to be made in order to find out if they correspond. (Dummett 1973, p. 442)

One reason why Frege rejects correspondence theories of truth is familiar from the literature: he supposes that such theories attempt to *define*

truth, something which he believes his 'regress argument' demonstrates to be impossible (1897, p. 134; 1918, p. 35). But as Dummett recognises, the untenability of correspondence theories also follows from Frege's conception of facts; and this is why Frege clearly occupies the region of metaphysical space inhabited by a modest identity theorist. Of course, it does not occur to Dummett to view Frege's remarks about facts as constituting a *theory* of truth, something which, no doubt, sheds light on Dummett's own expectations of philosophical theories. The question of what qualifies something to count as a theory proper is central to an evaluation of the modest identity theory, and it is a question to which we shall return presently.

For the time being, we should note that the interpretation of Frege as a kind of identity theorist has been disputed. According to Baldwin (1991a, p. 43), Frege 'explicitly discusses, and rejects, the identity thesis' in the following passage:

> A correspondence, moreover, can only be perfect if the corresponding things coincide and so just are not different things. . . . [I]f the first did correspond perfectly with the second, they would coincide. But this is not at all what people intend when they define truth as the correspondence of an idea with something real. For in this case it is essential precisely that the reality shall be distinct from the idea. But then there can be no complete correspondence, no complete truth. So nothing at all would be true: for what is only half-true is untrue. Truth does not admit of more or less. (Frege 1918, p. 35)[8]

The conclusion, Baldwin remarks, is 'a reductio of the identity theory of truth, *and indeed of any correspondence theory*' (1991a, p. 43, my italics).

This remark is odd enough given Frege's identification of facts with true thoughts in the same essay. But it is odder still for its claim that an identity theory is a kind of correspondence theory. Of course, one might be excused for regarding a *robust* identity theory in this way: a robust identity theorist at least shares the correspondence theorist's conception of facts, departing from a correspondence theory only by reconstruing the relation between true propositions and facts as correspondence's limiting case: identity. But a modest, Fregean identity theorist takes facts to be true thoughts, thereby rejecting the correspondence theorist's contention that truth is a relation between a proposition and a proposition-shaped entity from the realm of reference. The conception of facts held by a modest, Fregean identity theorist is so different from that of the correspondence theorist that it is a

mistake to bracket the two theories together. Baldwin, then, looks to be guilty of overlooking the possibility of there being a modest identity theory in addition to its robust counterpart.[9] And it is this error which, no doubt, goes some way towards explaining why Baldwin interprets the passage in question as an argument against '*the* identity theory' (Baldwin 1991a, p. 43, my italics) when it is really an argument which is supposed to provide a reason for *accepting* the thesis definitive of an identity theory which is properly modest.

In addition to assuming that all identity theories must be robust, Baldwin also fails to notice Frege's explicit claims concerning the argument's target. The argument is introduced with the words 'It might be supposed from this that truth consists in a correspondence of a picture to what it depicts' (1918, pp. 34–5). Frege then remarks that 'this goes against the use of the word "true" . . . ', before launching into the argument with the words 'A correspondence, moreover, . . . ' (ibid., p. 35). For sure, this shows correspondence theories to be Frege's target. But Frege is extremely clear when it comes to what he supposes a correspondence theory to be. Such a theory is held by a philosopher who 'define[s] truth as the correspondence of an idea with *something real*' (ibid., p. 35, my italics). Frege is thus arguing only against someone who holds that truth consists in the obtaining of a relation between a thought and an item from the real world: a *state of affairs*, in other words. Consequently, for Frege, the modest identity theory is *not* a correspondence theory, and so does not fall within the scope of the argument.

Having recorded this fact, the argumentative strategy of the passage should be clear: it simultaneously acts as an argument *against* correspondence theories and *for* the identification of facts with true thoughts (the modest identity theory). The argument is that if we seek to elucidate truth in terms of a relation of correspondence, this relation must collapse into that of identity, since anything less than the coincidence of true thought and fact leads to the conclusion that there is no truth. The argument is indeed a *reductio*, but only against correspondence theories. If facts are identified with true thoughts (if, that is, we deny that truth is 'the correspondence of an idea with something real'), the intolerable conclusion is avoided.

At this point, it would be as well to be absolutely clear as to the nature of the thesis that I am defending. I am defending the interpretation of Frege as a modest identity theorist, *not* Frege's argument for this position. This argument is, I believe, unsound for the simple reason that it relies upon an unwarranted presumption about how a correspondence theorist must conceive of the correspondence relation. Let me explain.

The key premise in Frege's argument is that correspondence can be qualified meaningfully as *perfect*, *complete* or *exact*. With this assumption in place, Frege observes that truth does not similarly admit of degrees: it 'does not admit of more or less'. Consequently, argues Frege, a thought can only be true if it corresponds *perfectly* or *completely* with a fact. And from this he concludes that such perfect correspondence could only be identity: 'if the first did correspond perfectly with the second, they would coincide'.

The problem for the correspondence theorist, as Frege sees it, is that correspondence admits of degrees but truth does not. But this just begs the question of why a correspondence theorist should take correspondence to admit of degrees. The most plausible answer would seem to be that Frege supposes that the correspondence between thought and fact must be akin to the way in which two pieces of a jigsaw, or the rejoined edges of a torn piece of paper, may fit together (Pitcher 1964, p. 10). We freely talk of such a fit being exact or inexact, perfect or imperfect. But most correspondence theorists do not think of correspondence in this way. To be sure, Wittgenstein's 'picture theory' of the proposition (1922, §§2.1–3.13), Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment (Russell 1912), and Russell's later logical atomist theory (Russell 1918) all employ a rich notion of correspondence: structural isomorphism. But none of these authors takes truth to admit of more or less. For all of them, 'exact correspondence' is a pleonasm: propositions and facts are either structurally isomorphic or not. Furthermore, when it comes to Austin, the fact that correspondence need not be taken to admit of degrees is clearer still. As I observed in Chapter 1, §2 above, Austin has it that true propositions are *correlated* with facts, but need not picture their structure in any way. If correspondence is treated in this way, as mere *correspondence-as-correlation* (Pitcher 1964, p. 10), it plainly does not admit of degrees. Frege's argument only works against straw men.

3.2 Having distinguished Frege's position from his argument for that position, we can move on to assess the former in more detail. Besides Baldwin's misplaced exegetical objection, there are two further worries prompted by interpreting Frege as a modest identity theorist. The first is that Frege at no time presents himself in this way. The second is that Frege remarks that '"true" . . . is not a relative term' (1918, p. 35), something which might suggest that he would be opposed to using the identity relation to explicate the notion of truth. The present section and the next are devoted to placating these worries.

When it comes to Frege's own presentation of his views about truth, one thing must be admitted from the outset: Frege did not tender, and almost certainly would not have regarded, the claim that facts are identical with true thoughts as an identity *theory* of truth. If the name 'theory of truth' is reserved for something which provides a definition, reduction, or explanation of what truth *is*, it is clear that what I have called the modest identity theory is not really a theory. But I shall discuss the question of the modest identity theory's analytical aims in §4 below. And my claim is not, in any case, that Frege would have recognised the modest identity theory as a theory proper. It is, rather, that Frege agrees with what the modest identity theory says.

When considering Frege's views on truth, two features stand out. First of all, as a result of his regress argument against definitions of truth (1918, pp. 34–5; 1897, p. 134), Frege insists that truth is '*sui generis* and indefinable' (1918, p. 37). 'Truth', says Frege, 'is obviously something so primitive and simple that it is not possible to reduce it to anything simpler' (1897, p. 129). Secondly, Frege insists upon what Blackburn has termed the *transparency* of the truth predicate (1984, p. 227). That is to say, Frege holds that believing that (or enquiring whether, etc.) <*p*> is true is the very same thing as believing that (or enquiring whether, etc.) *p*. So Frege not only believes the equivalence schema,

(E) <*p*> is true if and only if *p*,

to hold good; he takes it that '*p*' and '<*p*> is true' may be substituted *salva veritate* within hyperintensional contexts. In other words, he believes '*p*' and '<*p*> is true' to have the *same sense*. 'It is worth noting', says Frege, 'that the sentence "I smell the scent of violets" has just the same content as the sentence "It is true that I smell the scent of violets."'[10]

Depending upon which of these two features commentators stress the more, Frege is usually interpreted as holding either that truth is a substantial, yet indefinable property, or else some version of deflationism.[11] As we shall see in a moment, the second interpretation, relying as it does upon a conflation of transparency with deflationism, is incorrect. What I want to argue now, however, is that the interpretation of Frege as a modest identity theorist conflicts *neither* with deflationism *nor* with a view of truth as a primitive concept. Two further conclusions will be drawn in the present section. First of all, as I have just suggested, it is the second of the standard interpretations of Frege which is correct: Frege is no deflationist. Second, the modest identity theorist's remarks cannot *themselves* constitute an inflationary attitude towards truth.

Frege's view that truth is a substantial concept has its origin elsewhere than in his agreement with the modest identity theory.

With a view to demonstrating the compatibility of Frege's commitment to the modest identity theory with both standard interpretations of his views concerning truth, let us first of all consider the interpretation of Frege as an early deflationist. In order to see whether the treatment of Frege as a deflationist conflicts with my claim that he agrees with what the modest identity has to say, we should first of all be clear about the nature of deflationism. As we shall see in Chapter 6 below, the deflationary attitude towards truth consists of deflationary theses concerning, respectively, the utility of the *truth predicate*, the *property* of truth and what it is to have grasp of the *concept* of truth. The claim about the utility of the truth predicate is that it exists *solely* for the sake of a logical need (Horwich 1990, p. 2). More specifically, a deflationist claims that the truth predicate has no function other than that of enabling us to make indirect, or compendious, endorsements of assertions, as in

(1) What Susan just said is true

and

(2) Everything Susan says is true

respectively. The reason why the truth predicate can function in this way is, of course, that (leaving aside paradoxical replacements for '*p*') the following equivalence schema is correct:

(E) <*p*> is true if and only if *p*

If, for example, what Susan just said is that Julian is unreliable, then the correctness of (E) ensures that an assertion of (1) is just an indirect assertion that Julian is unreliable.

The deflationist's claims about the property of truth and the concept of truth also concern (E). The deflationist contends that there is no more to the truth of propositions than is given by (E). There is nothing that a proposition's truth *consists in*: nothing informative that can be said about the distinction between truth and falsehood beyond (E) or an anodyne gloss which may be placed upon it.[12] In other words, there is no property *F*, had by all and only the truths, of which it is correct to say that the truths are true *because* they have *F* (David 1994, pp. 65–6). Finally, when it comes to the concept of truth, a deflationist regards grasp of this concept as making minimal demands on a thinker. Getting one's mind around the concept is just a matter of being disposed to

assent to all of the (non-paradoxical) instances of (E) (Horwich 1990, p. 38). The crucial point is this: understanding the concept of truth does not require one to bring to bear any substantial concepts, such as those of *correspondence* or *coherence*.

Having set out the deflationary attitude towards truth in this way, two points need to be made. First, as I suggested earlier, what a modest identity theorist has to say does not conflict with a deflationary conception of truth. The reason for this is that the modest identity theory and the deflationary conception are in different lines of business. The *raison d'être* of the modest identity theory is that of illustrating the error made by correspondence theorists as to the nature of facts: when a correspondence theorist says that truth consists in correspondence between a thought and a fact, the modest identity theorist refutes this claim by noting that the relation between a true thought and a fact can only be that of identity. But these observations do not constitute the sort of account ruled out by deflationism. Given that a fact is a true thought, *being identical with a fact* cannot serve as the property *F* whose possession by truths is what their truth consists in: the notion of a fact is itself defined in terms of that of truth, so any appearance of *explanation* here is illusory. Neither does the modest identity theorist claim that truth *has* to be understood *via* the notion of identity; as Jennifer Hornsby puts it (1997, p. 22), we do not need any theory of truth save insofar as we may go astray without one. Were it not for the error made by correspondence theorists, what the modest identity theory says could go without saying. A modest identity theorist may yet regard the truth predicate as nothing more than a device of disquotation.

Frege could thus be *both* a deflationist and a modest identity theorist. But there is another reason why the claim that Frege is a deflationist should not be viewed as threatening our ascription of the modest identity theory to him. Frege was not a deflationist at all. To see why this is so, we must first introduce a crucial distinction: that between an acceptance of the *transparency* of 'is true' and a commitment to a *deflationary* view of truth. Frege, as we have seen, holds, not simply that each non-paradoxical instance of (E) is true; he takes the equivalence between '*p*' and '<*p*> is true' to be that of sameness of sense. For Frege, 'is true' is transparent. One might suppose that a recognition of truth's transparency amounts to an acceptance of deflationism. For if '<*p*> is true' and '*p*' are so strongly equivalent as to be intersubstitutable *salva veritate* within hyperintensional contexts, does this not entail, just as the deflationist claims, that truth is too insubstantial a notion to be anything other than a device for making compendious or indirect endorsements?

No, it does not. The claim that truth is transparent is quite distinct from the deflationary thesis. An analogy might help us at this point. As Blackburn points out (1984, p. 231), because the purpose of issuing a command is to get something done, 'do this' is transparent when it appears in constructions such as 'Do this: shut the door'. However, it is obvious that the transparency of 'do this' does not rule out the possibility of there being an informative account of what it is for a command to be successful. Having recognized this, we may note a potential parallel between the transparency of 'do this' and the transparency of 'is true'. For, in the same way in which commands aim at getting things done, it could be argued that judgments aim at truth; in which case, the transparency of 'is true' could be explained along the same lines as the transparency of 'do this'. That is to say, it could be argued that the reason why 'is true' is transparent is, not that truth is an insubstantial property, but that truth is the internal aim of judgment. Someone who accepts the transparency of truth but who wishes to resist deflationism will simply say, with Blackburn (1984, p. 23), that

> [d]iscussing, proving, querying, etc. whether *p* is of course the same as discussing, etc. whether *p* is true. But that is not, on this account, because 'is true' is somehow vacuous. It is because its content has already gone into the bag: if we are discussing, etc. a *judgement* then we are already governed by a conception of success in judgement, and one which philosophers should try to explain.

That the truth predicate is transparent does not automatically rule out the possibility of there being a substantial account of truth.[13] Ultimately, we shall see that the deflationary claim is correct, but the crucial point, for now, is that its correctness does not simply follow from truth's transparency.

Having made this point, Frege's position becomes a little clearer. For Frege, truth is a substantial notion because it is a distinct *norm*: it is what we aim at in judgment. Just notice how Frege begins his essay 'Thoughts':

> Just as 'beautiful' points the way for aesthetics and 'good' for ethics, so do words like 'true' for logic. All sciences have truth as their goal; but logic is also concerned with it in a quite different way: logic has much the same relation to truth as physics has to weight or heat. To discover truths is the task of the sciences; it falls to logic to discern the laws of truth. (Frege 1918, p. 33)

Once it is granted that truth is a distinct norm of judgment, it follows that truth is an interesting, substantial property. Crucially, however, in Frege's view, this *something more* to truth than its transparency cannot admit of definition or reduction. Making the point that truth is the aim of judgment cannot form a definition, or reduction, of truth since judgment is itself only explicable in terms of its aim: truth. It is thus the second interpretation of Frege – as holding truth to be an interesting, yet primitive concept – which does justice to the texts.

One moral to be drawn from a consideration of Frege's position is that the view of truth as a primitive notion does not preclude the possibility of our saying something of interest about it. Someone who takes truth to be irreducible or primitive can still insist that the concept can be illuminated by a description of its relations with other concepts (Baldwin 1999, pp. 1–2). Indeed, this would seem to be Frege's own view: presumably, he supposes that pointing out truth's role as the aim of judgment couples an illumination of the concept of truth with an acknowledgment of its place in our conceptual scheme as a *sui generis* norm. All that is ruled out by Frege is the possibility of reduction.[14]

The other moral to be drawn, however, is of more immediate importance. Once more, as is the case with the reading of Frege as a deflationist, the modest identity theorist need not disagree with what Frege is interpreted as saying. Although the modest identity theorist's remarks are *themselves* compatible with deflationism, they do not rule out the possibility that truth is a primitive, yet substantial, notion. An adoption of the modest identity theory can be coupled with the idea that there is more to truth than both a modest identity theory says and a deflationist would allow. For example, nothing about the modest identity theory itself entails that truth is not a *sui generis* norm. Having said this, in the following chapter it will become apparent that the deflationary position on truth is justified, and hence that we should couple our modest identity theory with a deflationary theory. But, for the present moment, we should appreciate that Frege's view of truth as a primitive, normative concept does not conflict with our view of him as a modest identity theorist.

3.3 As I remarked earlier, the second objection to treating Frege as a modest identity theorist is prompted by his denial that 'is true' is a relative term (1918, p. 35). According to Frege, an ascription of the truth predicate wears its logical form on its sleeve; '"true" looks like the word for a property' (1918, p. 34) rather than a relation, so Frege resolves to

persevere with this commonsense view until he is shown a convincing argument as to why he should not do so (1918, p. 37).

Frege's claim here is that 'is true' is really monadic, and one might be forgiven for thinking that this rules out the thesis that the concept of identity – a two-term relation – should enter into an elucidation of truth. But this would be a mistake, resting as it does upon a conflation of two distinct philosophical tasks: giving the logical form of a sentence (or class of sentences), and saying something (of a philosophical nature) about the concept expressed by a predicate. Frege's claim that 'is true' is monadic is a claim about the logical form of predications of truth: it is an account of the semantic function of the expressions which make up such predications; an account of what these familiar words are *doing here* (Davidson 1969, pp. 94–5). However, the modest identity theory is *not* supposed to be a theory of the logical form of predications of truth; it does not take a stand on this matter. It aims to do the fundamentally different job of saying something, of philosophical interest, about the concept expressed by 'is true': in effect, that truths are not made true by facts. As Jennifer Hornsby has noted (1997, note 6), if an identity theorist took a stand on the matter of logical form, it would be the wrong stand: something which would be contradicted by Frege's remark that 'is true' is monadic. But the only stand an identity theorist takes concerns, not the logical form of sentences containing 'is true', but the nature of the concept expressed by the predicate.[15]

Once this final move has been made, we can appreciate that Frege's remarks add up to a modest identity theory, even if he did not himself see them in this light. But our examination of Frege's views has had more than just an exegetical interest. More importantly for our purposes, the discussion of Frege has highlighted a number of features of the modest identity theory: its role in clarifying the mistake made by correspondence theories; its non-committal character when it comes to the question of the logical form of predications of truth; and its compatibility with both the view that truth cannot be defined and the taking of a deflationary attitude towards truth. In the course of the discussion of Frege, we also noted a concern about the modest identity theory's perceived lack of analytical ambition. Indeed, we wondered whether it really deserved to be described as a *theory* at all. The chapter's final section aims to assuage such doubts.

4. The modest identity *theory*

4.1 The relation between <*p*>, if it is true, and a fact is that of identity, not correspondence. A fact is nothing but a true thought. The modest

identity theory which the preceding sentence represents faces two objections. First, it might seem too slight to be of philosophical significance. To put it somewhat unkindly, one might be tempted to follow Candlish in thinking it to be 'evacuated of content' and 'uninteresting' (1995, p. 117). Second, one might suppose the modest identity theory to be just one more deflationary theory of truth; in which case one might doubt whether the modest identity theory adds anything new to the to-ing and fro-ing over the concept of truth. In this section I shall explain why both charges can be refuted. In essence, my position is this. The modest identity theory amounts to a correction of the correspondence theorist's misconceived conception of facts as truthmaking states of affairs, and hence cannot be vacuous. And, although the modest identity theory is *compatible* with a deflationary theory of truth, it is not itself a deflationary theory: it has a different function altogether, namely that of illustrating the error in the correspondence theorist's picture.

4.2 Let us focus on the first objection. Two features of the modest identity theory may prompt a worry that it is lacking in substance: the truistic nature of (I), the summarizing slogan, and the theory's denial that truth is a 'metaphysically heavyweight'[16] notion. I shall discuss them in turn.

Given that a fact is just a thought that is true, to say

(I) <*p*> is true if and only if <*p*> is identical with a fact

is to say, in effect, that a thought is true if and only if it is identical with a thought that is true. Once the notion of a fact is understood in the way in which the identity theorist demands, (I) becomes truistic. But two points must be made immediately. First, although the summarising slogan is truistic, the *theory* itself is not. According to the theory (the remarks which both elucidate the terms of (I) and argue for its adequacy), facts are nothing but true thoughts; and this is not a truism but a substantive philosophical thesis. Second, there is a substantial point in uttering (I): namely, to encapsulate the error of the correspondence theorist in taking facts to be truthmakers. To reiterate a familiar point, if a philosopher comes out with

(C) <*p*> is true if and only if <*p*> corresponds to a fact,

we should respond by saying this: given the nature of facts, if truth is to be illuminated in terms of a relation between a thought and a fact, the only available relation is that of identity; so the would-be correspondence theorist had better retreat to (I).

However, one may still be concerned that the modest identity theory is somehow not coming up with the goods. And one might express this doubt by calling into question whether it genuinely qualifies as a *theory of truth* at all. But why deny it? To be sure, the modest identity theory does not have the sorts of ambitions usually associated with things we call 'theories of truth'. As we have noted already, once a fact has been defined as a true thought, the claim that a thought is true just in case it is identical with a fact does not provide us with a *definition* of truth; nor does it give us an account of what truth consists in. But this does not entail that what the modest identity theorist has to say is 'evacuated of content' altogether, for it acts as a corrective to the correspondence theorist's vision of facts as truthmakers. Despite not sharing the analytical aims of traditional theories of truth, the modest identity theory none the less has a place in the distinctively metaphysical debate which correspondence theories have come to dominate.

The point here is a subtle one. While the modest identity theory's role is purely critical, while it would not so much as exist were it not for the correspondence theory, it is far from 'uninteresting'. Indeed, how *could* it be uninteresting, given that it forms part of a stand against correspondence theories? I suppose that one may still ask whether this is sufficient to make the modest identity theory a *theory of truth* proper, but such a quibble is now verbal only. For the modest identity *is* a theory concerning truth: to wit, that the supposed truthmakers of a correspondence theorist – facts – are really truthbearers: (true) thoughts. And we have seen how the theory's adoption has a significant philosophical function, even though it does not offer the kind of account of truth found in textbooks.

A failure to appreciate the possibility that we may theorize about truth without offering a definition explains Candlish's dismissal of the modest identity theory as trivial 'precisely because it has no independent conception of a fact to give content to the identity claim' (1995, p. 117). If the aim of the modest identity theorist were to *define* truth, or to try to explain the difference between truth and falsehood, it would have to be counted as a failure. But we have noted already that the theory is not in this line of business. The *raison d'être* of the modest identity theory is precisely to make the point that there should not *be* such a thing as an independent conception of a fact. Facts are nothing but true thoughts; they do not form a basic ontological category. The identification of facts with true thoughts is not a *merging* of ontological categories; it is a reduction of the former to the latter.[17] And this is a substantial philosophical move even though it does not meet up to the standards

of philosophical analysis presupposed by Candlish. Too close an attachment to these standards prevents us from appreciating the multiplicity of philosophical tasks that might be associated with a concept such as truth.

Another kind of objector may still feel dissatisfied, however. And here we come to the second feature of the modest identity theory which might prompt the concern that it is vacuous. For some have seen the job of a theory of truth as being that of articulating the distinction between thought and extra-linguistic reality:[18] something that the modest identity theory evidently fails to do. For the modest identity theorist, facts are not portions of extra-linguistic reality at all; they are identified quite harmlessly with true thoughts, which are located in the realm of sense rather than the realm of reference. So, in saying that true thoughts are identical with facts, we remain silent on the question of the relation between thought and the extra-linguistic world.[19] Only if facts were in that world could such an identification be a part of an account of the relation between thought and reality, and it is the rejection of this conception of facts which distinguishes the modest identity theory from its more robust counterpart.

But why should it be supposed that a theory of truth need bring with it a positive account of language/world relations? That the modest identity theory has nothing positive to say on this issue does not thereby render it trivial. Grasping the correctness of the modest identity theory enables us to avoid the error of the correspondence theorist: namely, that of thinking facts to be truthmakers. So although the (modest) identity theory of truth has no *positive* metaphysical content, it enables us to intervene decisively in the dispute concerning the nature of truth and the nature of facts.

So there seems no good reason to withhold the title 'theory of truth' from the position which I have taken up. But is it really an *identity* theory? An objector may wonder what I have gained by saying that true thoughts are *identical* with facts, as opposed to merely saying that true thoughts *are* facts. The answer to this question draws upon what has been said already about its status as a theory and its role in criticizing correspondence theories. The modest identity theory does not state that truth *is* a relation between a thought and a fact: we have seen that the theory is not an account of what truth *is*, or *consists in*, at all (though, as we have also seen, this does not thereby render it trivial). Rather, the modest identity theory constitutes a response to an error made (about the nature of facts) by correspondence theorist, and it is this role which requires use of the concept of identity. The point which the modest identity

theorist presses is this: we cannot explain truth as a correspondence between a proposition and a fact because the only available relation is that of identity. Formulating the theory using the concept of identity thus focuses the sights of the theory on its target: correspondence theories. As long as philosophers continue to promote correspondence theories of truth, we should continue to say to them, 'No, a true thought is *identical* with a fact'. Since the correspondence theorist's mistake is interesting, so is the modest identity theorist's response to it.

4.3 But what of the charge that the modest identity theory is just one more deflationary theory of truth? If this charge could be made good, we would be entitled to ask whether the modest identity theorist has really added anything new to the debate concerning truth.

One thing is for sure: as I explained in §3 above, the modest identity theory's remarks about truth do not amount to the sort of thing which the deflationist rules out. To say that all true thoughts are facts is to highlight a common feature of true thoughts, but it is a truistic one given the prior reduction of facts to true thoughts. Crucially, however, (and we noted this when discussing Frege's views) nothing about the modest identity theory *entails* that the deflationary thesis is correct. The modest identity theorist replies to the correspondence theorist by identifying facts with true thoughts; nothing about this identification itself rules out the possibility that there is something else to be said, of a substantial nature, about truth and falsehood.

But in fact, as we shall see in the next chapter, the deflationist's demythologizing of the concept of truth is wholly justified. However, what this means is, not that the modest identity theory is itself a deflationary theory, but that we should combine its insight concerning the metaphysics of correspondence with a deflationary theory of truth. To see what is wrong with the correspondence theorist's picture, and to have the appropriate antidote to it, is to be a modest identity theorist. But to fully understand the concept of truth, which is to understand that it is a good deal less interesting than many have supposed, we must couple the modest identity theory with a deflationary theory.

What cannot be stressed enough is that the part played by the modest identity theory is essential to the success of the deflationary project. Without it, we lose sight of the fault in the correspondence theorist's picture, and hence, ultimately, weaken the deflationary case. Deflationists have tended to regard would-be correspondence theorists as failing to say anything distinctive about truth. Essays at correspondence theories are often portrayed by deflationists as gallant failures to say anything

more than would be said by a deflationary theory.[20] This is a mistake and, as such, does not help the deflationist to loosen the grip that 'correspondence'-talk may exert over us. If the appeal of correspondence theories is to be satisfactorily exorcized, we must achieve the insight of the modest identity theory; and this indicates that the modest identity theory has a distinct, though complementary role to play to the deflationary attitude towards truth. Deflationism can only be argued for effectively once the correspondence theory has been dismantled; and to do this, we must take up the vantage point afforded us by the modest identity theory.

Notes

1. I first introduced the distinction between modest and robust identity theories in my 1995.
2. For an expression of precisely this motivation for adopting a robust identity theory, see Moore (1902, pp. 20–1) and Russell (1904b, p. 75).
3. As we shall see in Chapter 7, §4 below, it is the view that '[t]here is no gap between thought, as such, and the world' (McDowell 1994, p. 27) which pushes both McDowell and Jennifer Hornsby towards a robust identity theory. This interpretation is, however, controversial since Hornsby denies (somewhat puzzlingly) that her identity theory is robust (1999, pp. 2–3).
4. Horwich is one such example. His 'space of alternative theories' (1990, pp. 9–13) does not include identity theories.
5. Thomas Baldwin (1991a) is an example of this latter tendency, his paper concluding with the claim that '*the* identity theory' (my italics) is an 'influential but indefensible theory of truth' (p. 51). As Baldwin's use of the definite article illustrates, he takes there to be just one kind of identity theory available (the robust theory, as I have called it). One could put the main contention of the present chapter like this: such a judgment could only have been made by someone who has failed to notice the modest alternative to the robust identity theory. The best explanation of *why* the modest identity theory passes Baldwin by is, I think, his assumption that a theory of truth must *define* the concept (1991a, pp. 35, 42), something which the modest identity theory does not aim to do. For a discussion of the modest identity theory's analytical aims, see §4 below.
6. Jennifer Hornsby (1997, 1999) portrays her identity theory as modest but, as we shall see in Chapter 7, it is far from clear that this is so.
7. Stewart Candlish (1995, p. 117; 1997, p. 1) has expressed this worry.
8. The following response to Baldwin's interpretation of Frege is along the same lines as that in Dodd and Hornsby (1992).
9. This impression is strengthened by the final paragraph of §II of Baldwin (1991a). Baldwin (rightly) says that Frege would not have accepted the Moorean view that a true propositional content is an actual state of affairs,

since Frege took propositional contents to be *thoughts*: things which, unlike states of affairs, are occupants of the realm of sense. Of course, this would indeed have been Frege's reaction to the Moorean thesis. However, the stunning feature of this passage is the deafening silence when it comes to the modest identity theory. Given that Frege took facts to be *nothing more than* true thoughts, he would not even have contemplated the *robust* identity theory. His remarks about the nature of facts suggest the more plausible identity theory that I have been recommending.

10. Similar remarks are scattered throughout Frege's writings. For example, in his 1892, Frege writes:

> One might be tempted to regard the relation of the thought to the True not as that of sense to reference, but rather as that of subject to predicate. One can, indeed, say: 'The thought, that 5 is a prime number, is true.' But closer examination shows that nothing more has been said than in the simple sentence '5 is a prime number.' (1892, p. 30)

Frege also endorses truth's transparency in his 1897 (pp. 128–9) and 1915 (pp. 251–2).

11. The former interpretation is suggested by, among others, Holton (1997, p. 136); Davidson (1996, p. 265) and Baldwin (1999, *passim*). Burge (1986, pp. 119–21) and Horwich (1990, p. 6) take the latter view, which is also tentatively suggested by Kirkham (1992, p. 317).
12. One such truistic gloss is this: a proposition is true just in case things are as it says they are.
13. In fact, as we shall see in Chapter 6, §8, there is, strictly speaking, no general *norm of truth*. There are as many distinct aims as there are projects or interests. However, this conclusion does not follow from a recognition of truth's transparency: it requires separate argument. Consequently, the point made in the present section stands: one should not simply equate an acknowledgement of the truth predicate's transparency with an acceptance of deflationism.
14. Some have doubted whether a view of truth as indefinable, yet substantial, can really be distinguished from deflationism. After all, both views deny that truth can be reduced to some more basic property *F*. Daniel Stoljar, for example, has claimed that '[i]t is certainly not obvious that there is any distinction between having a nature about which nothing can be said and having no nature at all' (1997, p. 13). But in spite of what Stoljar says, there is, none the less, clear philosophical space between the deflationary attitude towards truth and the view of truth as an interesting, yet *sui generis*, property. For one thing, we have noted already that truth's being primitive does not entail that nothing of interest can be said about it: primitive concepts, though irreducible, can none the less be illuminated by a clear and convincing description of their usage. Furthermore, once we drop misleading talk of truth's having, or not having, a 'nature', and bring to bear our account of what deflationism *is*, the difference between the two accounts in question becomes apparent. While both views deny that truth can be reduced to some more basic property *F*, they do so for *different reasons*. The deflationist thinks that truth is irreducible because it is too thin a notion for reduction to be an option: 'is true' is just a syntactic device. This may be contrasted

with the claim made by someone who takes truth to be substantial yet indefinable. According to this latter view, the indefinability of truth follows, *not* from the fact that 'is true' is a mere expressive device, but from the fact that the notion of truth is a basic element in our conceptual scheme.

15. A version of the distinction I have been appealing to is invoked by Davidson in the course of his theory of adverbial modification (1967c). As he explains,

> [t]o know the logical form of a sentence is to know, in the context of a comprehensive theory, the semantic roles of the significant features of the sentence. . . . To know the logical form of 'The rain caused the flood' is to know whether 'caused' is a sentential connective or a two-place predicate (or something else), but it hardly begins to be knowledge of an analysis of the concept of causality (or the word 'caused'). Or perhaps it is the beginning; but that is all. (1967c, p. 146)

Of course, the modest identity theorist's remarks about truth do not constitute an 'analysis', or definition, of truth: they are more informal than that. We can, none the less, agree with the sentiments expressed here by Davidson.

Davidson himself is also aware of how the distinction between giving the logical form of a sentence and explicating a concept has application to the concept of truth. Specifically, Davidson notes that a correspondence theorist of truth believes that 'the property of being true is to be explained by a relation between a statement and something else' (1969, p. 37). That is to say, the correspondence theorist does not deny that truth is a property (that 'is true' is monadic); she seeks to explain the concept expressed by 'is true' in terms of a two-term relation. Clearly, if the correspondence theorist can do this, and so avoid denying that 'is true' is monadic, then so can an identity theorist.

16. This phrase is borrowed from Crispin Wright (1992, p. 72)
17. In this respect, the identity of facts with true thoughts is unlike the claimed identity between, say, pain and C-fibre stimulation. Candlish's failure to appreciate this feature of the modest identity theory also prompts his charge that (I) fails to specify *which* fact is identical with <*p*> (Candlish 1999b, p. 203). There is only a problem here for someone who has an independent conception of facts and who then tries to match up facts with true propositions. But this is not what a modest identity theorist tries to do. A fact is simply a true thought, so the answer to the question 'Which fact is identical with <*p*>?' is: the fact that *p*.

    Candlish's concern that identity theories are endangered by a commitment to logically complex facts (1999b, p. 202) also carries no weight with the modest identity theory. Of course, if the modest identity theory is correct, there *are* such facts. But the fact that $\neg p$ is just the (true) thought that $\neg p$; and there is no problem with admitting such thoughts into our ontology. If facts are just true thoughts, then, as Strawson has it, worries about logically complex facts 'vanish like a dream' (Strawson 1998, p. 403).
18. For example, Peter Carruthers (1981, p. 19).
19. Of course, this does not imply that a philosopher who adopts the modest identity theory will have nothing to say about how thought, or language, is related to extra-linguistic things. The modest identity theory does not automatically commit one to quietism on this question. Rather, its supporter may argue that this question should be *relocated* away from the concept of

truth. She rightly rejects the correspondence theorist's assumption that thoughts are made true by inhabitants of the realm of reference; but such a move need not prevent her from formulating substantive questions about the nature of the relations of reference and satisfaction.

20. See, for example, Horwich (1990, pp. 110–11) and Quine (1987, p. 213). The deflationist's usual position is nicely expressed by Baldwin's remark that '*the thought . . . that there is anything substantive describable* as 'the correspondence conception of truth . . . is threatened by claims of modesty on behalf of truth, to the effect that there is nothing more to the concept of truth than is given by the equivalence principle' (1991b, p. 21. My italics).

6
A Variety of Deflationism Defended

1. Introduction

I ended the previous chapter by claiming that the modest identity theory complements a deflationary attitude towards truth. Specifically, a recognition that facts are identical with true thoughts enables us to appreciate the untenability of correspondence theories; and once we achieve this insight, we are left free to adopt a deflationary theory. In this sense, then, an adoption of the perspective afforded us by the modest identity theory acts as a philosophical antidote to 'correspondence'-talk: once it is taken, we can get on with deflating the concept of truth, our philosophical good health guaranteed.

Of course, saying this merely serves to prompt three big questions. Precisely what *is* the deflationary attitude towards truth? What form should a deflationary theory of truth take? And is such a deflationary theory really defensible? The present chapter is devoted to answering these questions. In §2 I outline what I take to be the deflationary attitude towards truth, and then briefly motivate the taking of such an attitude before, in §3, going on to outline the shape a deflationary theory of truth should assume. The remainder of the chapter discusses and, it is hoped, refutes the most pressing objections made to the kind of deflationary theory I recommend. By the chapter's end, I hope to have justified the claim that our conception of truth should consist of a deflationary theory coupled with the insight provided by the modest identity theory.

2. Deflationism

The distinction between substantial and deflationary theories of truth is a familiar one within analytic philosophy.[1] What is more, the rationale

for making such a distinction is clear: to put our finger on the significant contrast between, on the one hand, theories such as those offered by Quine (1970) and Horwich (1990), and, on the other hand, traditional correspondence and coherence theories. But what does the difference between the two types of theory consist in? The metaphor of deflation certainly gives us a clue, presenting the deflationist as someone believing the concept of truth to have been blown up out of all proportion, or perhaps filled with hot air. But the pressing question is how to make this characterization more precise. Just what is it about truth that is presupposed by a seeker after a substantial theory but denied by a deflationist?

With this question in mind, the best place to start is with an uncontentious thesis concerning the function of 'is true'. Both the deflationist and the seeker after a substantial theory of truth agree that 'is true' has the syntactic function outlined in Chapter 2, §3 above. We use it to make indirect endorsements, as in

(1) What Susan just said is true;

and we also use it to make compendious endorsements, as in

(2) Everything Susan says is true.

That the truth predicate has this function is due to the fact that, leaving aside paradoxical replacements for '*p*', the following schema holds:

(E) <*p*> is true if and only if *p*.[2]

For example, if what Susan just said is that Julian is unreliable, the correctness of (E) guarantees that to say that what Susan just said is true is just an indirect way of saying that Julian is unreliable.[3]

What has been said up to now is, as I have said, accepted by deflationists and substantial theorists alike. The dispute between them concerns whether 'is true' is anything more than the device just outlined. More precisely, one's attitude towards truth is deflationary, as opposed to substantial, just in case one holds that truth is *nothing more than* that whose expression in a language gives that language a device for the formulation of indirect and generalized assertions.[4] Two further theses follow from this benchmark claim. First, there follows a thesis about the *property* of truth. For if 'is true' is *solely* a syntactic device whose function is made possible by (E), then there can be no more to a proposition's being true than the fulfilment of the truth condition which it is assigned by (E). Accordingly, there can no account of what truth *consists in*: there is no prospect of discovering a property *F* shared by all

and only the truths, such that the truths are true because they are *F* (David 1994, pp. 65–6).[5] We saw in Chapter 1 that the correspondence theorist's candidate for *F* – *being made true by a state of affairs* – cannot be made out. But the deflationist's contention is stronger than a mere rejection of correspondence: it is that the *kind of project* undertaken by a correspondence theorist – the search for a property *F* explanatory of truth – is misconceived.

So much for the deflationist's claims about the utility of 'is true' and the property of truth. The deflationist also has a distinctively austere thesis about what it is to have possession of the *concept* of truth, a thesis which seems to follow from the claim about truth itself. We have just registered the deflationist's contention that there is no more to a proposition's being true than the obtaining of the truth condition which it is assigned by (E). But if this is so, then possessing the concept cannot require a thinker to possess any putatively more basic, explanatory concepts. Since (E) exhausts all that can be said about what it is for a proposition to be true, the deflationist's account of what it is to possess the concept of truth must be analogously minimal. A full understanding of the concept of truth thus cannot require one to bring to bear concepts such as those of *correspondence*, *state of affairs* or *coherence*. Rather, the most natural thing for the deflationist to say on this matter is that possession of the concept consists merely in being disposed to accept all of the (non-paradoxical) instances of (E) (Horwich 1990, p. 38).

Having set out the deflationary attitude in this way, we can immediately begin to see its attractions. For one thing, it has a clear demystificatory message. Truth is that property whose expression in a language gives us a device for making indirect and compendious endorsements, and *that is that*. Calling off the search for a property *F* explanatory of truth, and appreciating the concept's simplicity, will appeal to those sympathetic to Wittgenstein's reminder that philosophical questions may just have the *appearance* of depth (1953, I. §111), and that the real discovery might, at least on occasions, be one which makes us capable of stopping doing philosophy (ibid., I. §133).

It is thus fair to say that if one is susceptible to a demystificatory approach to philosophical questions, deflationism about truth will have some appeal. But what has not yet been sufficiently explained is why we might regard the concept of truth as *especially* requiring deflation. Why should we be more open to the suggestion that the concept of truth has only *apparent* depth than we are to similarly deflationary suggestions concerning, say, the concepts of meaning and causation? The answer lies, I think, in the peculiarly sterile nature of the debate

between the usual candidates for the role of the explanatory property *F*. We saw in Chapter 1 that *being made true by a state of affairs* cannot do the job, but it is equally clear that the usual alternatives – variations on the themes of *cohering with a set of beliefs* or *commanding agreement in ideal conditions* – are just as flawed.[6] And when it comes to the modest identity theory, while this gives us an insight into the mistakes made by correspondence theorists, it is not *itself* a provider of the explanatory property *F*. Given that a fact is nothing but a thought that is true, the property of being (identical with) a fact, though a property which all and only the truths share, goes no way to *explaining* the distinction between truth and falsehood. The crucial motivation for examining whether a deflationary theory of truth might be acceptable is simply that no would-be substantial theorist has yet come up with a remotely plausible substantial theory. Given this state of play, the thought that truth might not admit of the kind of explanation presupposed by would-be substantial theorists becomes increasingly appealing.

3. Minimalism

We now know both what it is for a conception of truth to be deflationary and why such a deflationary approach is attractive. This, however, inevitably prompts the following question: what form should a deflationary theory of truth take? I want to set out a number of claims, claims about truth and 'is true', which entail that, once smitten by the deflationary ideal, our deflationary theory should, in essence, be the 'minimalism' espoused by Horwich (1990, 1998).

The first such claim is that 'is true' is a genuine predicate. This much was argued in Chapter 2, §3.1–3.2. To recap, we need a truth *predicate* to enable us to make indirect or compendious endorsements (as in (1) and (2) respectively), its function being that of cancelling semantic ascent and, hence, enabling us to talk about how the world is by means of talking about propositions. It is precisely the role of 'is true' in sentences such as (1) and (2) which causes Ramsey's redundancy theory (1927) – a cousin of minimalism – such trouble. According to Ramsey, all occurrences of 'true' may be assimilated to those in which it features as a part of the operator 'it is true that . . . '. Hence, because the truth operator is akin to the double negation operator, it follows that all occurrences of 'is true', like those of the double negation operator, are gratuitous and may be harmlessly deleted. Of course, the problem with this 'double negation theory'[7] is that 'is true' appears to have an ineliminable predicative function in (1) and (2). We

seem to need a truth *predicate* to enable us to say things such as (1) and (2).

As we saw in Chapter 2, §3.2, in the face of this objection, the redundancy theorist can only appeal to second-order quantification. That is to say, she must seek to explain away the apparently ineliminable truth predicate in

(2) Everything Susan says is true

by representing its logical form as

(3) $(\forall p)$ (Susan says that $p \rightarrow p$)

rather than

(4) $(\forall x)$ (Susan says $x \rightarrow x$ is true).

This, however, just raises the question of how the quantifiers and variables in formulae such as (3) can be understood. As we have already noted (again, in Chapter 2, §3.2), the variables could only be read prosententially. In the end, the double negation theory must metamorphose into the prosentential theory offered by Grover *et al*. (1975): the view that 'it is true' and 'that is true' are themselves syncategorematic prosentences. But at this juncture I can merely repeat that the case for treating these locutions as unstructured prosentences has not been adequately made. The view of 'that is true' as comprising a demonstrative and a predicate is far more convincing.

My second claim, again based upon conclusions already reached (at the very end of Chapter 2, §3.2), is that truth is a property. Given that 'is true' is a genuine predicate, there is no harm in taking there to be a property of truth. Horwich puts the point this way:

> 'is true' is a perfectly good English predicate – and (leaving aside nominalistic concerns about the very notion of 'property') one might well take this to be a conclusive criterion of standing for a property of some kind. What the minimalist wishes to emphasise, however, is that truth is not a *complex* or *naturalistic* property but a property of some other kind. (Hartry Field suggests the term '*logical* property'.) (Horwich 1990, p. 38)

Horwich is absolutely right to suppose that the minimalist is entitled to treat truth as a property. Whether this means that truth is not a *complex* property I am not too sure. Neither is it clear that the point of dispute between deflationists and seekers after a substantial theory of truth is

whether truth is a *naturalistic* property. Presumably, there could be a correspondence theorist who took the substantial relation of correspondence to be *sui generis* and hence insusceptible to naturalistic reduction. What a minimalist should say, it seems to me, is this. Truth is a property all right; but it is just that property whose expression in a language gives that language a device for cancelling semantic ascent. There is no more to the property than that.[8]

Truth is a property because 'is true' is a genuine predicate. But what is such a predicate predicated *of*? This brings me on to my third claim: truth is a property of *propositions*, something which I argued for in Chapter 2 and which is explicit in my formulation of the equivalence schema in §2 above. The only significant difference between Horwich's minimalism and Quine's 'disquotational theory' (Quine 1970) is that Horwich is happy to include propositions in his ontology and, once he has done this, equally happy to follow ordinary language in treating propositions as the bearers of truth. As I explained in Chapter 2, §3.3, Horwich is surely right in this. Naturally, if it turned out that there were no satisfactory account of the nature of propositions available to us, we would be entitled to consider revising that part of our ordinary talk which treats propositions as the vehicles of truth. However, Chapter 3 provided just such an account. Propositions are types of utterance and, as a result, are objective without being self-subsistent occupants of a mystificatory third realm.

A deflationary theory which treats truth as a property of propositions is, as I have mentioned already, to all intents and purposes the theory which Horwich defends: minimalism. It is such a minimalist theory that I shall be defending from §4 onwards. But one question remains before such a defence can start: what is the nature of the equivalence holding between '<*p*> is true' and '*p*'? In my view the equivalence is that of sameness of sense. What I mean by this is that '*p*' and '<*p*> is true' are intersubstitable *salva veritate* within hyperintensional contexts, notably contexts of propositional attitude. As we noted in the previous chapter, to believe that/enquire whether, etc. *p* is just to believe that/enquire whether, etc. <*p*> is true. In this sense, truth is *transparent*.

A failure to appreciate the strength of the equivalence between '*p*' and '<*p*> is true' is perhaps best explained as the result of supposing the transparency of 'is true' to entail the redundancy theory: a theory we have seen to be untenable. Both Holton (1997, p. 138) and Daniel Stoljar (1997, p. 5) assume that to accept that '*p*' and '<*p*> is true' have the same sense is to take sides with Ramsey on the question of the superfluity of the truth term. But such thinking is mistaken. From the fact that

an ascription of truth to an explicitly given proposition has the same sense as an assertion of the proposition in question, it does not follow that 'is true' is superfluous in contexts in which the proposition is *not* explicitly given (cases such as (1) and (2)). Of course, if we did not go in for making indirect or compendious assertions, if we only used 'is true' as a predicate of explicitly given propositions, 'is true' would be redundant. But as we have noted already, the *raison d'être* of the truth predicate is precisely to facilitate the making of indirect and compendious assertions: we have a truth predicate expressly because we need to say things such as (1) and (2). Now, we have already noted that 'is true' is plainly irredundant in such sentences, so it follows that reading the equivalence in the equivalence schema as that of sameness of sense does not commit us to the redundancy theory of truth. Having exposed this fallacy, we may accept the transparency of 'is true' with a clear conscience.

4. Minimalism and the concept of truth

As I mentioned in §2, Horwich's claim about the *concept* of truth is as follows: possession of the concept is a matter of being disposed to accept all of the (non-paradoxical) instances of (E). But Anil Gupta alleges that it is just this account of understanding that gets Horwich into trouble. In Gupta's view, because a great many of the instances of (E) employ concepts with which we are unfamiliar, it is not true of *these* instances that we have a disposition to accept them. As he himself puts it,

> [n]one of us has more than a minute fraction of the concepts employed in the biconditionals, yet we have a good understanding of the concept of truth. Similarly, we lack a disposition to accept the vast majority of the biconditionals, but this casts not the slightest doubt on our understanding of truth. (Gupta 1993, p. 366)

But I think Gupta is a little unclear about the disposition which determines our understanding of 'is true'. To be sure, we are not disposed to *formulate* the infinite number of instances of (E). One can only use a concept in the formulation of an instance of (E), if one possesses that concept. But Horwich's claim is only that we are disposed to *accept* the (non-paradoxical) instances of (E). That is to say, Horwich's thesis is (or at least, should be) that, if we were presented with any (non-paradoxical) instance of (E), we would accept it. And this is true. I am (shamefully) unfamiliar with many of the concepts of theoretical physics. But if someone were to formulate an instance of (E) using such concepts,

and then present it to me, I would accept it. That is to say, I would take the instance in question to be true.

Gupta, no doubt, would be unhappy with this reply. For I have simply elucidated Horwich's view that our understanding of 'is true' is determined by certain regularities of use; and Gupta takes exception to precisely this way of looking at things. According to Gupta, '[o]ur understanding of truth does not *derive from* the biconditionals. Instead, in the context of certain kinds of information, it *leads to* the biconditionals' (Gupta 1993, p. 367). According to Gupta, in other words, understanding 'is true' (or, presumably, any other word) correctly cannot be a matter of being disposed to use it correctly; rather, that understanding must be an occurrent state which acts as the *source* of our subsequent correct use.

But at this point, alarm bells should start to ring. For the idea that understanding is the source of correct use is a version of the picture of understanding that Wittgenstein so compellingly dismantles in his rule-following considerations (Wittgenstein 1953, §§138–242). Wittgenstein, indeed, presents for consideration just the kind of account presupposed by Gupta. Considering the case of someone's continuing an arithmetical series, Wittgenstein says:

> Perhaps you will say here: to have got the system (or, again, to understand it) can't consist in continuing the series up to *this* or *that* number: *that* is only applying one's understanding. The understanding is a state which is the *source* of the correct use. (ibid., §146)

But to this Wittgenstein has a reply:

> What is one really thinking of here? Isn't one thinking of the derivation of a series from its algebraic formula? Or at least something analogous? – But this is where we were before. The point is, we can think of more than *one* application of an algebraic formula; and every application can in turn be formulated algebraically; but naturally this does not get us any further. – The application is still a criterion of understanding. (ibid., §146)

The problem for someone who wishes to say that understanding is an occurrent state which is the source of (or 'leads to') correct use is this: it is hard to think of the supposedly occurrent state of understanding other than in terms of something coming before the thinker's mind. This, for Wittgenstein, is 'where we were before': he spends §§138–41

pulling apart this very idea. And although this is not the place for a detailed discussion of Wittgenstein's rejection of the conception of understanding as an item's coming before the mind, we can none the less pick up the main threads.

Wittgenstein considers the suggestion that understanding the word 'cube' consists in a mental item, such as an image, flashing before the mind as the word is heard (ibid., §139). But his (by now familiar, yet irresistible) response is that such a mental item cannot compel one to apply the word one way rather than any other. 'The picture of the cube did indeed *suggest* a certain use to us, but it was possible for me to use it differently' (ibid., §139). The problem with the idea that a mental item can act as the source of one's correct use of a word is that such mental items can themselves be *variously interpreted*, and hence may conform with any number of different ways of applying the word (ibid., §198).

Gupta's conception of understanding as a state which somehow compels one's correct use is, if Wittgenstein is right, a fairy tale. My own view is that Wittgenstein is indeed right; so we should take Gupta's objection to the minimalist account of our concept of truth with a large pinch of salt.

5. Truth-value gaps

The next objection concerns what seems to follow from the correctness of (E). Leaving aside the cases of paradoxical substituends for '*p*' in (E), (E) would seem to entail that there cannot be propositions which are neither true nor false; and this conclusion, so it is supposed, is contrary to the facts. Dummett puts the point nicely:

> A preliminary reservation must be made as to the correctness of the equivalence thesis, quite apart from its status within a characterization of the notion of truth: this reservation concerns the application of the equivalence thesis to any language for which the law of bivalence does not hold. Suppose that A is a sentence which expresses a thought which may, in certain circumstances, be neither true nor false. Then the sentence ⌜It is true that A⌝ cannot be equivalent to A: for, when the thought expressed by A is neither true nor false, say because A contains a name which has a sense but lacks a reference, the thought expressed by ⌜It is true that A⌝ will be false, although, by hypothesis, that expressed by A is not false. (Dummett 1973, p. 445)

The problem is easy enough to understand, but the example Dummett gives of a thought which fails of truth-value is contentious. The idea that an empty name may none the less express a sense, and hence that sentences containing the name in question may express thoughts, is of dubious coherence.[9] To be sure, it is inconsistent with the austere theory of sense which we adopted in Chapter 3. If, as I recommended there, we follow McDowell (1977) in taking the sense of a name to be given by an axiom specifying its reference, it follows that names (or, better, words which *appear* to be names) with no reference can have no sense. On this view, sentences containing 'empty names' do not express thoughts, and hence the appearance of genuine truth-value gaps here is illusory.

Consequently, it is perhaps better to focus on the case of vagueness, if we are to get a grip on Dummett's objection. If a sentence contains a vague predicate, such as 'is bald', then it is possible that the application of such a predicate to a borderline case will result in a sentence which expresses a thought which is only unhappily described as true or false. This might encourage the idea that such cases prove that truth-value gaps occur. Minimalists, in insisting upon the correctness of (E), which, in turn, entails that there cannot be truth-value gaps, would seem to be committed to a doctrine which the everyday phenomenon of vagueness has shown to be false.

Given this state of play, many commentators assume that the success of the minimalist project depends upon the minimalist's finding a satisfactory response to the apparent conflict between (E) and the possibility of truth-value gaps: typically, either by denying that there really are truth-value gaps, or by arguing that the conflict is unreal.[10] But at this point we need to answer the question: is this really an objection to *minimalism*? As I mentioned in §2, *any* theorist of truth acknowledges that 'is true' is a device for making compendious or indirect endorsements. Given that this is so, and that it is the equivalence of '*p*' and '<*p*> is true' which enables the truth predicate to perform this function, it follows that any theorist of truth must be committed to the correctness of (E). The dispute between a minimalist and a correspondence theorist, for example, cannot concern whether (E) is (generally) *correct*; it can only concern whether there is *anything more* that need be said about the truth of propositions besides (E). Accordingly, the fact that the correctness of (E) seems to commit one to bivalence, and hence to the impossibility of truth-value gaps, is not a problem specific to minimalism. It afflicts any remotely plausible theory of truth.

It is thus a mistake to suppose that what has been called 'the bivalence objection' is an objection to *minimalism*: an objection which might

motivate us to replace it with a correspondence theory, for example.[11] Consequently, consideration of the various strategies for dealing with the alleged incompatibility of (E) and truth-value gaps – interesting as they are – cannot help us to advance the debate as to the cogency of minimalism. We can leave well alone.

6. Minimalism and the truth-theoretic approach to meaning

The next objection I wish to consider is that any deflationary theory of truth, minimalism included, is incompatible with the truth-theoretic approach to meaning. In fact, as Dummett accepts, the objection is really that deflationism cannot be coupled with the view that understanding a sentence *consists in* knowing its truth condition (Dummett 1978, p. xxi). Knowing the truth condition of a sentence, so it is claimed, cannot serve as both knowledge of the sentence's meaning and knowledge that helps to constitute our grasp of 'is true'. For knowledge that

(5) 'Coal is black' is true if and only if coal is black

to be knowledge of the quoted sentence's meaning, one must know already what it is for it to be true; while for knowledge of what is expressed by (5) to help constitute knowledge of what is meant by 'is true', one must know that the right-hand side of the biconditional gives the meaning of the quoted sentence.

This much is undeniable. Consequently, the deflationist must either repudiate the truth-theoretic approach to meaning altogether or argue that it need not make any such claim about understanding. The first option is extremely unpromising, for the virtue of the truth-theoretic approach is that it supplies a non-metaphorical reading of the platitude that the meaning of a sentence is systematically determined by those of its parts. Furthermore, the assumption that natural languages have a compositional, truth-theoretic semantics has played a crucial role in the argument of this book up to now. In Chapter 2 my main argument for the existence of propositions was that such things are the ontological commitments of a neo-Davidsonian account of indirect discourse, an account which presupposes natural languages to have a compositional, truth-theoretic semantics. As a result, I have no choice but to take the second option: that of attempting to marry minimalism with the truth-theoretic approach to meaning by virtue of dropping the requirement that understanding a sentence *consists in* knowing a theorem from the language's interpretational truth-theory.

Fortunately, such a marriage can be consummated. Without doubt, a theory of meaning for a language is in the following sense a theory of understanding: it generates theorems each of which specifies *what is understood* by someone who understands a sentence of the language. But, as we saw in Chapter 2's discussion of the austere conception of the sense of a proper name, providing such a specification is an entirely different task from saying *how* a speaker comes to have this knowledge. And once we have separated these issues we may see that the truth-theoretic conception, being concerned with *what* speakers understand rather than *how* they understand it, does *not* itself entail that knowing a language *consists in* knowing the appropriate theory.

Another way of making the same point is this: knowledge of the appropriate theory of meaning only *suffices* for understanding the language. (The need to be in a position to make this claim is seen when it is accepted that one task of a theory of meaning is (merely) to give the meaning of each of the language's sentences, and that the meaning of a sentence is what is understood by someone who understand it.) But possessing knowledge of an interpretational truth-theory is only one way of understanding a language, and, for sure, it is not how *we* do it; as McDowell has commented, '[c]omprehension of speech in a familiar language is a matter of unreflective perception, not the bringing to bear of a theory' (1977, p. 118). Consequently, we may acknowledge that we give the meaning of a sentence by giving its truth condition while treating Wittgenstein's remarks on understanding (1953, §§138–242) with the respect that they deserve.

At this point, the objector may argue that this reply fails to take issue with the objection in its most basic form. For if the minimalist says that (5) gives the meaning of its quoted sentence, then it follows that she is seeking to explain meaning in terms of truth; while if (5) is to help constitute the meaning of 'true', then it must be understood that the right-hand side of the biconditional gives the sense of the quoted sentence, which is just to say that truth is being explained in terms of meaning.

Such a reply, however, misconstrues the reason why theories of truth subserve theories of meaning. A theory of meaning for a language aims to provide us with theorems which pair object-language sentences with meta-language sentences which give their meanings. Schematically, such theorems will be of the form

(M) *s* . . . *p*,

in which '*s*' is replaced by a name of a sentence and '*p*' is replaced by a sentence which is used to give its meaning. The question is: what

'filling' will take us from *s* to *p*? As a first step we might suppose that we move from *s* to *p* by way of stating the necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of some predicate to *s*. So, with 'is *T*' serving as a dummy predicate, the form of the theorems would be

(T) *s* is *T* if and only if *p*.

What sort of predicate are we looking for? Well, if the object-language is contained within the meta-language, the ideal sentence to give the meaning of a quoted sentence is that same sentence removed from quotation marks. So it follows that we are looking for a sentence which acts as a disquotation device. It is this fact about truth, and this fact *alone*, that determines the suitability of 'is true'. The reason why 'truth is what a theory of sense is a theory of' (McDowell 1976, p. 8) is that 'is true' is a device for cancelling semantic ascent.[12] Because no more about truth need be presupposed, the minimalist may couple her deflationism with an acceptance of a version of the truth-theoretic conception of meaning.[13]

Naturally, this version of the truth-theoretic conception softens the claim that the concept of truth explains that of meaning. The truth predicate merely serves in theorems as part of the filling between the quoted sentence and a sentence which gives its meaning. But, as we have seen, it need not be the business of a theory of meaning to say *how* we interpret a language; and truth is certainly explanatory of meaning in a diluted sense because it may come as a *discovery* that 'is true if and only if' can serve as the filling in the theorems of a theory of meaning. There is no conflict between the truth-theoretic approach to meaning, properly understood, and minimalism about truth.

7. Davidson, minimalism and 'the proposition that *p*'

Let us now move on to the objection levelled by Davidson. As Davidson sees it, the problem with minimalism lies with its use of the locution 'the proposition that *p*' (or, simply, 'that *p*') in (E). We should be familiar with such a concern by now. As I explained in Chapter 2, §3.3, given that 'that'-clauses consist of a propositional term-forming sentential operator and an inserted sentence, it is mysterious how they can be accommodated within a compositional, truth-theoretic semantics. In order for such an accommodation to take place, there must be an account of how the reference of, say, 'the proposition that Socrates is wise' is systematically determined by the functional expression together with the semantic features of the inserted sentence. And the problem – as Davidson sees it – is that it is unclear how there could be such an account.

There are, it appears to Davidson, only two options available to the minimalist. On the one hand, the minimalist may claim that 'Socrates is wise', when embedded within 'the proposition that . . . ' operator, is the semantically unstructured name of the proposition it ordinarily expresses. Such a move, needless to say, leaves us with an infinite primitive vocabulary, and commits us to the view that the sentence changes its semantics when inserted into the 'the proposition that . . . ' context. On the other hand, Davidson suggests, the minimalist may modify (E) so that its instances are theorems such as

(6) The proposition expressed by the sentence 'Socrates is wise' is true if and only if Socrates is wise,

which, as Davidson notes, 'would require relativising the quoted sentence to a language, a need that Horwich must circumvent' (1996, p. 274). On the basis of this, and presupposing that the minimalist *has* to regard (E) and its instances as containing the operator 'the proposition that . . . ', Davidson concludes that neither (E) nor any of its instances can be understood. As he pithily puts it,

> we cannot *understand* the result of the iteration [of a sentence in an instance of the schema] unless we can see how to make use of the same semantic features of the repeated sentence in both of its appearances – make use of them in giving the semantics of the schema instances. I do not see how this can be done. (1996, p. 274)

Two critical remarks need to be made before I get on to my substantive reply. First of all, Davidson is surely mistaken in supposing that he has demonstrated that we do not *understand* (E) or any of its instances. Properly formulated, his conclusion can only be that there is available no satisfactory account of the logical form of the schema's instances, and hence that there exists no possible explanation of what it could be to understand them. For we surely *do* understand sentences such as 'The proposition that Socrates is wise is true if and only if Socrates is wise'. Consider an analogous claim applied to kinds of sentence which the truth-theoretic semanticist has found recalcitrant. Davidson presumably did not believe that sentences in *oratio obliqua*, or sentences in moods other than the indicative, were literally incapable of being understood before he arrived at his justly famous accounts of such sentences (1968 and 1979 respectively). This being so, the same goes for (E). Davidson's criticism, properly understood, is that there is no available account of what the words in the instances of the schema are doing,

rather than the (frankly fantastic) view that such sentences are beyond our comprehension.

My second criticism follows on from the first, but is more *ad hominem*. Davidson supposes that the failure of anyone to yet come up with an adequate semantics for the schema and its instances undermines the whole minimalist project. In his own words, Davidson takes his objection to be a 'reason to reject it if it cannot be resolved' (1996, p. 273). But now compare the situation with that concerning Davidson's own truth-theoretic approach to meaning. At the end of his seminal article outlining his framework, Davidson (1967a) draws our attention to a number of kinds of sentence for which a truth-theoretic, compositional semantics cannot be straightforwardly given: sentences in indirect speech, sentences containing verbs of propositional attitude, sentences in the optative, interrogative and imperative mood, and so on (ibid., pp. 35–6). At the time, many philosophers (perhaps even Davidson himself) had little or no idea how an adequate semantics for these sentences could be arrived at; but, quite rightly, Davidson did not regard these lacunae (at that time) as conclusively undermining his project. Although the taming of recalcitrant kinds of sentence must *eventually* be achieved if his strategy is ultimately to satisfy, Davidson evidently viewed such a technical achievement as a long-term aim rather than something which must be in place before the overall truth-theoretic strategy can be assessed. Well, if this goes for Davidson's approach to meaning, then it surely goes for minimalism about truth. Davidson has not demonstrated that there could not be an adequate semantics for the instances of (E); he has just pointed out that none so far exists and that he cannot imagine what such an account would be like. This being so, the minimalist is entitled to follow Davidson's own example and regard the technical problem of explaining the logical form of instances of (E) as being something that may follow, rather than precede, a consideration of the more general and overarching merits of the minimalist conception of truth. For this reason, Davidson is mistaken in thinking that minimalism's cause is doomed by the failure of any of its supporters to yet come up with an adequate semantics for (E).[14]

It is one thing to point out that Davidson's objection does not immediately undermine minimalism. It is quite another to take up the challenge of providing an account of the logical form of instances of (E). But the challenge can be met, ironically enough, by once again making use of Davidson's own paratactic apparatus. The minimalist must simply deny that the instances of (E) contain a propositional term-forming operator.

Davidson's paratactic account of *oratio obliqua* has been a recurring *leitmotif* of this book. In Chapter 2 we saw that representing the logical form of

(7) Lois Lane said that Superman can fly

as

(8) Said (Lois Lane, that). Superman can fly

serves us well, provided that the demonstrative 'that' of the reporting sentence is taken to refer to the *proposition* (= thought) expressed by the utterance of the content sentence, and not (as Davidson thinks) to the utterance itself. In Chapter 2 we also noted Davidson's concerns about 'that *p*' can be bypassed, if we follow Davidson himself in applying this paratactic apparatus to other sentences containing (apparent) that-clauses. On such a view, both

(9) It is true that it is raining

and

(10) The statement that it is raining is true (1969, pp. 51–2)

are represented as

(11) True (that). It is raining.

But, of course, given that we have emended Davidson's account by taking the demonstrative in (8) to name the *proposition* expressed by the utterance of the content-sentence, the demonstrative in (11) cries out for a similar explication. And this has two interesting results. First, as we realized in Chapter 2, if the demonstrative in (11) names a proposition, we thereby have support for the thesis that the vehicles of truth are propositions. Second, if we apply the same emended paratactic account to a sentence such as

(12) It is a fact that it is raining

we get

(13) Fact (that). It is raining.

And granted, as seems inevitable, that we take 'that' in (13) to name a proposition too, we end up committed to the idea that the thing which is true – the proposition expressed by 'It is raining' – is also the thing which is a fact. With the case for construing propositions as thoughts

having been made (in Chapter 3), we thereby have a theoretical grounding for the Fregean thesis that facts are true thoughts.

Where does all this leave Davidson's objection to minimalism? Well, the obvious move is to appeal once more to our emended paratactic account of the logical form of sentences containing (apparent) 'that'-clauses. Let us now follow through this suggestion.

To begin with, there is no reason why the *word* 'proposition' should appear in the minimalist's reading of the schema, so we may rewrite (E) as

(E*) That *p* is true if and only if *p*.

And we can now simply represent the logical form of an instance of (E*), a sentence such as

(14) That Socrates is wise is true if and only if Socrates is wise

as

(15) Socrates is wise. True (that) if and only if Socrates is wise,

in which the utterance of the demonstrative names the thought expressed by the utterance of the content-sentence.

Davidson's puzzlement at the instances of (E) and, we may take it, (E*) is based on the assumption that the minimalist supposes them to contain a propositional term-forming sentential operator, 'that . . . ' or 'the proposition that . . . '. As we have seen, his challenge to the minimalist is to give an account of precisely how this operator works which will enable it to be incorporated within a compositional, truth-theoretic semantics. The benefit of my account is that the application of Davidson's paratactic machinery (though not his ontology) enables us to circumvent this problem. Instances of (E) and (E*) do not contain such an operator, so the problem does not arise. To put it another way, there is no mystery as to how we can make use of the same semantic features of 'Socrates is wise' in both of its appearances. The first appearance of the sentence does not combine with 'that' to form a name of a proposition, reference to the proposition it expresses being accomplished by means of the demonstrative 'that' of the semantically distinct sentence which follows it. Hence the constituent words of the first appearance of 'Socrates is wise', like those of the second, may be taken to have their customary senses and referents.

The upshot is that the minimalist may cling to the view that propositions are primary truth bearers and yet give a plausible account of the logical form of the instances of the equivalence schema. Davidson has revealed nothing that should upset the minimalist's equanimity.

8. Minimalism and 'the norm of truth'

The final objection to minimalism that I shall consider is perhaps the most significant. Dummett agrees with Frege (1918, p. 35) that truth is a *norm* in the sense that it is truth which assertions *aim at*. And, according to Dummett, any minimalist account which seeks to explicate the concept of truth merely by way of (E) will thereby fail to account for this central feature.

The crucial analogy to be drawn, Dummett argues, is between grasping the concept of truth and knowing what it is to win a board game:

> It is part of the concept of winning a game that a player plays to win, and this part of the concept is not conveyed by a classification of the end positions into winning ones and losing ones. . . . Likewise, it is part of the concept of truth that we aim at making true statements. . . . We cannot in general suppose that we give a proper account of a concept by describing those circumstances in which we do, and those in which we do not, make use of the relevant word, by describing the *usage* of the word; we must also give an account of the *point* of the concept, explain what we use the word *for*. (Dummett 1959, pp. 2–3)

The minimalist, if Dummett is right, has failed to grasp the *point* of truth.

How should a minimalist respond? It might seem that the minimalist has an obvious, and convincing, reply to Dummett's claim. To be sure, an assertion must be governed by a standard of success, and for this to be so, it cannot be the case that the success of an assertion is guaranteed by the mere fact that it is made. Assertions, it must be said, aim at something. However, since the minimalist takes the truth predicate to be nothing but a device for endorsing assertions, and since (E) tells us that any reason to think that <*p*> is true is a reason to make or allow the assertoric move associated with the proposition in question, what is to stop the minimalist from regarding the norm expressed by 'is true' as simply that of warranted assertibility?

It is at this point that an argument put forward by Wright (1992, pp. 16–21) assumes importance. According to Wright, the escape route which we have just considered – that which seeks to reduce the supposed norm of truth to that of warranted assertibility – is nothing but a *cul de sac*. For Wright claims that 'is true' and 'is warrantedly assertible' are revealed to differ in extension once we consider negated substituends

within (E). *(E) itself* commits us to there being a more than minimalist property of truth.

The argument itself is very simple. Because every proposition has a significant negation, from (E) we may deduce:

(16) <¬*p*> is true if and only if ¬*p*.

But from (E) we can also deduce

(17) ¬*p* if and only if ¬(<*p*> is true),

because, given a biconditional and the negation of one of its constituents, we may infer the negation of the other. Now, from (16) and (17), by the transitivity of the biconditional, we can deduce

(18) <¬*p*> is true if and only if ¬(<*p*> is true).

However, once we replace 'is true' with 'is warrantedly assertible, we generate a falsehood. If what takes the place of '*p*' in

(19) <¬*p*> is warrantedly assertible if and only if ¬(<*p*> is warrantedly assertible)

is a proposition which we are warranted neither in asserting nor denying, then (19) fails to hold from right to left (Wright 1992, pp. 19–20). What this means, according to Wright, is that truth is a *sui generis* norm: a norm distinct from warranted assertibility (ibid., p. 71). If truth is, as Dummett believes, the aim of assertion, the minimalist cannot accommodate this fact by attempting to reduce truth to warranted assertibility.

How should minimalists reply to Wright's argument? One strategy, suggested by Horwich (1996, pp. 879–80), is to accept Wright's claim that 'is true' expresses a *sui generis* norm of assertion, but to claim that the normativity of truth can be derived from (E). The follower of such a strategy would argue something like this.[15] The normativity we are concerned with lies in the following schema:

(20) One should assert that *p* only if *p*.

However, in order to capture (20)'s content in a single, universally quantified statement, we must first of all rewrite it as

(21) One should assert that *p* only if <*p*> is true,

something which is summarized colloquially as

(22) One should assert only what is true,

and whose logical form may be represented as

(23) $(\forall x)$ (One should assert x only if x is true).

As a result of reasoning of this kind, Horwich claims that

> contrary to Wright's contention, our use of the truth predicate to articulate a distinct norm of assertion squares perfectly with the central thesis of deflationism: that the truth predicate is merely a device to facilitate certain forms of generalization – device whose functioning requires nothing more or less than satisfaction of the disquotation schema. (Horwich 1996, p. 880)

As we shall see, Horwich is correct to suggest that what we have here is an instance of the truth predicate's familiar role as a facilitator of generalization. But his gloss on what is happening cannot help the minimalist's cause. For in accepting that 'is true' marks a distinct norm, Horwich thereby awards the prize to Wright. The crucial point is this: if 'is true' really does mark a distinct norm, then, *pace* Horwich, the truth predicate has to be more than a mere device of endorsement. This being so, Wright is surely correct in charging Horwich with committing an *ignoratio elenchi* in arguing that (E) is sufficient to account for the norm of truth (Wright 1996, p. 913). For it is the correctness of this very schema which, according to Wright, commits us to a more than minimal conception of truth.

It seems to me that what this shows is that the minimalist can only reply to Wright by denying that the truth predicate expresses a norm of assertion. Specifically, the minimalist should say that the truth predicate in

(22) One should assert only what is true

is merely fulfilling its familiar syntactic function (that of facilitating generalization), and thus does not express a property with an explanatory role. The correct response to Dummett's claim that truth is a norm of assertion is not to attempt to identify this norm with that of warranted assertibility, but to deny that truth is a norm at all. If this reasoning is sound, Wright's argument, to the effect that the norm of truth cannot be identified with that of warranted assertibility, leaves minimalism unharmed.

In order to see what I am getting at here, it may help to show how a minimalist may explain away another apparently troublesome claim: namely, that scientific theories are successful because they are true. This

claim too sees truth proposed as having an explanatory role in addition to its syntactic function; and an appreciation of the minimalist strategy for dealing with this claim will shed light upon the application of what is essentially the same strategy to Dummett's declaration that truth is a norm of assertion.

When it comes to the putative role of truth in explaining scientific success, the minimalist will reply in the following way. She will first of all distinguish between the truth predicate's merely figuring in the expression of an explanation and truth's being genuinely explanatory, before then going on to argue that the role of truth in the explanation of scientific success belongs in the former category. With this in mind, we may isolate two kinds of case in which the truth of a scientific theory may seem to explain its success. First of all, there are cases in which the appearance of the truth predicate is clearly inessential. As Horwich points out, for example,

(24) The theory that nothing goes faster than light works well because it is true

may be rewritten as

(25) The theory that nothing goes faster than light works well because nothing goes faster than light (Horwich 1990, p. 50).

In paraphrasing (24) as (25), we thereby reveal that it is a *fact* that explains the success of the theory in question, not the truth of any proposition.

The second kind of case is that in which we need exploit the familiar function of the truth predicate as a device of endorsement. We may wish to make a 'blind' endorsement, as in

(26) The Special Theory enables accurate predictions because it is true (ibid., p. 49),

or we may need to generalize, as in

(27) True theories yield accurate predictions (ibid., p. 50).

But these cases are no more problematic than those in which 'is true' is obviously redundant. For in (26) and (27), although the truth predicate appears in an explanation, it is not *truth* that does the explaining. The truth predicate is only needed to play its familiar role of facilitating the making of indirect or compendious endorsements. As Michael Devitt puts it, 'truth is needed not because it is explanatory but because our only way of identifying the worldly facts that are explanatory is by taking advantage of the expressive role of truth' (Devitt 1991, p. 280).[16]

We should, by all means, accept (27), but we should be aware that such an acknowledgement does not commit us to truth's having a substantial explanatory role. The point is not that the minimalist can *account for* how truth explains the success of scientific theories; it is that truth is not explanatory in this regard.

The moral for the supposed normativity of truth should now be clear. Horwich is right to think that

(22) One should assert only what is true

sees the truth predicate merely acting as a device for enabling generalization with respect to sentence positions. But he is quite wrong to suppose that this means that the minimalist has thereby allowed for truth's being a norm of assertion. Horwich has neglected the distinction between the truth predicate's featuring in explanatory statements and truth's being itself explanatory. Indeed, if, as Horwich supposes, our use of 'is true' in (22) is '*nothing more than* an instance of the role of the truth predicate, emphasised by contemporary deflationists, to state certain generalizations' (1996, p. 879, my italics), it plainly could not express a norm. For on this view, (22) is just shorthand for an infinite conjunction of claims of the form

(28) One should assert that snow is white only if snow is white; one should assert that coal is black only if coal is black, etc.,

claims which do not make use of the truth predicate at all. If 'is true' *only* appears in (22) for the purpose of effecting a generalization, truth itself is not explanatory in any way. Truth can no more be a norm of assertion than it can explain the success of scientific theories. As Devitt explains, '[b]ecause of its expressive role, truth can play a role in any explanation. As a result one can be easily misled into thinking that truth is playing an explanatory role' (Devitt 1991, p. 280).[17]

This, of course, is not to deny that the kinds of claims instanced in (28) are normative. The point is that there is no general norm of *truth* to which all assertions aspire. It is undeniable that

(21) One should assert that *p* only if <*p*> is true,

but we should remember that we only need to use the truth predicate in (21) in order to successfully generalize upon

(20) One should assert that *p* only if *p*,

in which the truth predicate does not figure. What this shows is that it is not *truth* which is the aim of an assertion; an assertion's aim is

introduced by the sentence which takes the place of '*p*' in the relevant instance of (20). What counts as success depends on what is asserted: the assertion's *subject-matter* (Heal 1987–8, p. 107). There is no illuminating general story to be told. Mary's assertion that there is some water in the fridge is successful only if there is some water in the fridge; Michael's assertion that there is a willow warbler over by yonder tree is successful only if a willow warbler is really there; and so on. These respective assertions have distinct, subject-specific aims, and there are as many different aims as there are particular interests or projects.

That the minimalist ends up denying that there exists a general norm of truth should come as no surprise, since it mirrors exactly her claim that there is no general explanation of the truth of propositions. The minimalist takes there to be no more to truth than its transparency; consequently, she will hold that 'the transparency of truth allows whatever valuable features there are in a situation or project to shine through but does not itself contribute anything of substantial value' (ibid., p. 97). From the minimalist point of view, the transparency of the truth predicate means, *not* that the predicate marks any of the norms associated with the sentences to which it applies, but that, being colourless, the predicate expresses no norm at all.

None the less, at this juncture an objector may insist that I have failed to address Dummett's concerns about *point*. For what is missing from the minimalist picture is an account of the *value* of truth: *why it matters* that one's assertion should turn out to be true. Russell, for one, took the question of *why* we should aim at truth to be deep and genuine. Furthermore, he came to regard his own earlier view of truth as an unanalyzable quality as indefensible precisely because it fails to deliver an answer to the question of why truth is valuable. According to Russell, the theory that truth is an unanalyzable quality 'seems to leave our preference for truth a mere unaccountable prejudice, and in no way to answer to the feeling of truth and falsehood' (Russell 1904b, p. 75).

The minimalist response to this line of thinking should be obvious by now. Although one aims to assert only what is true, truth *in general* has no value. The value of making a true assertion is determined by the nature of the subject of enquiry, or project, undertaken. For example, the reason why it matters to Mary that her assertion is true has nothing to do with truth in general and, if we fill out the example a little, everything to do with Mary and her companions needing to slake their thirst. Likewise, it matters to Michael that he makes only true assertions about the varieties of birds he sees, not because of some interest in truth in the abstract, but because of what he takes to be the intrinsic value of

birdwatching. The question 'Why should we value truth?' has no answer because, asked in abstraction from a particular project or interest, it is misconceived.

Where does all this leave Wright's argument? Wright has indeed highlighted a difference in extension between 'is true' and 'is warrantedly assertible'. But this does not undermine the minimalist's claim that 'is true' is nothing but a device of disquotation. For the minimalist can say this: because the truth predicate is just a disquotation device, Wright's argument proves, *not* that truth is a norm distinct from that of warranted assertibility, but that the question of whether it is warrantedly assertible that *p* is distinct from the question of whether *p*. In other words, Wright has merely shown that whether snow is white is distinct from whether it is warrantedly assertible that snow is white, whether coal is black is distinct from whether it is warrantedly assertible that coal is black, and so on. But those of us with a robust sense of reality knew that already.

There is no norm of truth, so there can be no difficulty for the minimalist in accounting for such a norm. Minimalism stands. We should couple our modest identity theory – a theory which correctly diagnoses the travails of correspondence theories – with a minimalist theory of truth.

Notes

1. See, for example, Williams (1966, pp. 202–3), Wiggins (1980, pp. 189–94) and David (1994, pp. 3–5).
2. The parenthetical 'non-paradoxical' is important. If a liar-type paradoxical proposition takes the place of '*p*', then the resulting instance of the schema is not true: depending upon what one has to say about such paradoxical propositions, the resulting instance of (E) will be either false or lacking in a truth-value. However, the fact that (E) is only in this sense *generally* correct is of no matter: we are disinclined to endorse paradoxical propositions, and so have no need to use 'is true' to make indirect or compendious such endorsements. The utility of 'is true' is thus not compromised by noting this class of exceptions to the correctness of (E).
3. I shall explain what I take to be the nature of the equivalence between '*p*' and '<*p*> is true' in §3 below.
4. As Horwich (1990, p. 2) explains the deflationary claim, '[t]he truth predicate exists solely for the sake of a certain logical need'. Here Horwich echoes Quine's claim that '[s]o long as we are speaking only of the truth of singly given sentences, the perfect theory of truth is what Wilfrid Sellars has called the disappearance theory of truth' (1970, p. 11).

5. Here I am in agreement with J.A. Burgess (1997, p. 259). A minimalist conception of truth is, as he would put it, *minimally informative* (1997, p. 261).
6. For a good survey of the standard attempts to come up with a substantial theory of truth, see Haack (1978, ch. 7).
7. The redundancy theory is rechristened in this way by Davidson (1969, p. 38).
8. Strictly speaking, then, it is wrong to formulate deflationism, as do Boghossian (1990, p. 161), Wright (1992, p. 71) and Kirkham (1992, p. 311), as the doctrine that there is no property of truth. Of course, both the redundancy theorist and the prosentential theorist have no choice but to deny that truth is a property: if 'true' always functions as an object-language expression, and never as a predicate, then what the word expresses cannot be a property. But a deflationist who accepts that there is a genuine truth *predicate*, and who is not swayed by nominalism, should be happy to admit that truth is a property.
9. For the claim that Frege's acceptance that empty names express a sense is inconsistent with his own conception of sense, see Evans (1982, pp. 22–30).
10. Horwich himself believes this (1990, pp. 81–7), as does Frederick F. Schmitt, who believes the existence of truth-value gaps to be fatal to the minimalist's project (Schmitt 1995, pp. 136–41).
11. The name 'the bivalence objection' comes from Schmitt (1995, p. 136). Schmitt believes that 'to account for the truth-conditions of vague sentences, we require the services of a correspondence theory of truth' (1995, p. 141).
12. My understanding of the project of truth-theoretic semantics is very much influenced by McDowell (e.g., 1976, 1977, 1981, 1987).
13. This, indeed, is McDowell's view. According to McDowell (1987, pp. 88–9),

    > [t]he basis of the truth-conditional conception of meaning, as I see it, is the following thought: to specify what would be asserted, in the assertoric utterance of a sentence apt for such use, is to specify a condition under which the sentence (as uttered) would be true. The truth-conditional conception of meaning embodies a conception of truth that makes that thought truistic. (I am inclined to think it is the only philosophically hygienic conception of truth there is.) The truism captures what is right about the idea that '. . . is true', said of a sentence, functions as a device of disquotation, or, more generally, of cancellation of semantic ascent.

    Similar remarks are to be found in McDowell (1981, p. 319).
14. Horwich makes a similar response to Davidson in his 1999.
15. Horwich's reasoning (1996, pp. 879–80) is definitely of this style, although the details differ somewhat from my presentation. Any difference is, however, superficial.
16. We might wonder whether Devitt's usage of 'worldly' commits him to the dubious view of facts as occupants of the realm of reference, but the force of his point remains undiminished by this worry. For an account of how facts may explain without being worldly in (what I suspect to be) Devitt's sense, see Chapter 4 above.
17. It is not only Horwich who has been thus misled. Both Stoljar (1997, p. 12) and Max Kölbel (1997, p. 44) accept that 'is true' only occurs in (22) as a device of generalization, yet go on to suggest that the deflationist has thereby accounted for the norm of truth. Indeed, Kölbel claims that

> the deflationist's continued insistence that the norm captured by [(22)] ought not be called 'truth' would be mere quibbling. Indeed, it would seem part of the syntactic function of 'is true' and its cognates that this norm can conveniently be called 'truth'. (1997, p. 44)

But I have no mere quibble. I simply distinguish between a predicate's being used as a syntactic device in an explanatory statement and the property it expresses being genuinely explanatory.

7
Aberrations of Rival Identity Theories

1. Introduction

The modest identity theory recommended in Chapter 5 emerges as the corollary of a proper diagnosis of the mistake made by correspondence theories. Facts are not, as the correspondence theorist supposes, states of affairs which occupy the truthmaking role; they are nothing but true thoughts. The correspondence theorist, transfixed by the idea of truthmaking, misconstrues the nature of facts: she looks for correspondence where there can only be identity.

It is important to realize, however, that the modest identity theory, prompted, as we have seen it to be, by its particular diagnosis of the travails of correspondence theories, is not the only available identity theory of truth. As I noted in Chapter 5, identity theories may also be *robust* – taking facts to be states of affairs rather than true thoughts – and in that chapter I made some brief objections to robust theories. In this, the book's final chapter I would like to put some more flesh on the bone by critically examining three robust (or, at least, *arguably* robust[1]) identity theories: those offered by Russell (1903, 1904b) and Moore (1899, 1902); F.H. Bradley (1893, 1907) and, more recently, Jennifer Hornsby (1997, 1999).

Any identity theory serves to remind us of something which correspondence theorists have, supposedly, forgotten. Consequently, as with the modest identity theory I recommend, each rival identity theory emerges as a response to the metaphysics of correspondence. In what follows we shall see how the character of each rival identity theory is determined by its own particular explanation of where the correspondence theorist goes wrong. But we shall also see how each of the three robust theories misdiagnoses the trouble with correspondence. Given

the nature of correspondence theories of truth, we can only put our finger on the thing forgotten by the correspondence theorist, if we adopt an identity theory which is modest.

2. Moore and Russell

2.1 Let us return to the distinction between modest and robust identity theories of truth. A modest identity theorist takes facts to be true thoughts: occupants of the realm of sense. The robust identity theorist, by contrast, takes facts, and the true propositions with which they are identical, to be states of affairs: things from the realm of reference whose constituents number worldly objects and properties. At once, however, we should note that robust identity theories fall into one of two categories, depending on whether they take the notion of a *fact* or, alternatively, the notions of *proposition* and *truth* to be fundamental. An acquaintance with this distinction is crucial, if we are to properly contrast the robust theory held for a while by both Russell and Moore with that adopted by Bradley.[2]

Perhaps the most obvious route to a robust identity theory is what we may call the *facts-first* route. A facts-first robust identity theorist begins with a conception of facts as worldly entities and then identifies true propositions with such independently characterized items. Because a conception of facts is the starting point for the theory, such a robust identity theory is clearly in the same line of business as correspondence theories. A facts-first robust identity theorist, like a correspondence theorist, sees her theory as explaining what truth consists in by virtue of unearthing a property *F* had by all and only the truths, such that all the truths are true because they have *F*. Of course, the resulting explanation contrasts with that offered by a correspondence theorist. According to a facts-first robust identity theory, a proposition is true because it is *identical with* (not because it *corresponds* to) a fact. For a proposition to be true, it must literally *become* a piece of reality.

As we shall see, Bradley's identity theory can be seen as being broadly of this type. Although Bradley eschews talk of the world being divided up into states of affairs (preferring simply to talk of 'reality'), and although he embraces a form of idealism about this reality, he none the less starts with a conception of reality and then insists that for proposition (or, as he would say, a *judgment*) to be true, it must *become* reality. This, indeed, is why he regards truth as leading to thought's suicide (Bradley 1893, p. 150). For a judgment to be true, it must cease to be a judgment at all and coalesce with the world.

Now let me introduce the kind of robust identity theory held briefly by Russell and Moore at the beginning of the century. That both philosophers, for a time, identified facts with true propositions is undeniable. Indeed, during this period, Moore explicitly regarded correspondence theories as failing precisely because they seek to locate truth in a correspondence between items that are in fact identical:

> It is commonly supposed that the truth of a proposition consists in some relation which it bears to reality; and falsehood in the absence of this relation. The relation is generally called a 'correspondence' or 'agreement'; and it seems to be generally conceived as one of partial similarity; . . . and hence . . . it is essential to the theory that a truth should differ in some specific way from the reality to which its truth is to consist . . . It is the impossibility of finding any such difference between a truth and the reality to which it is supposed to correspond which refutes the theory. (Moore 1902, pp. 20–1)

Echoing this passage, Russell claimed that 'a fact appears to be merely a true proposition' (1904b, p. 75), a remark which thereby placed him in agreement with Moore's conclusion that 'a truth differs in no respect from the reality to which it was supposed to correspond: e.g. the truth that I exist differs in no respect from the corresponding reality – my existence' (Moore 1902, p. 21).

Moore's resulting position – that the truth that he exists is identical with his existence – occupies the same metaphysical space as a facts-first robust identity theory: a true proposition is a piece of reality. But there is a crucial difference. Even if we leave to one side both Bradley's idealism and his unusual conception of the terms of the identity relation, it is plain that Russell and Moore have arrived at their robust identity theory by a different road. For both Russell and Moore, the concepts of a *proposition* and of *truth* are prior to that of a *fact*. The starting point for Russell and Moore is a conception of a proposition as a mind-independent state of affairs: something which has as constituents those things in the world which the proposition is about.[3,4] Truth is then claimed to be a simple, unanalyzable property of propositions (Moore 1899, p. 180; Russell 1904b, p. 75), and a fact is then defined as a proposition which has the simple, unanalyzable property of truth. For this reason, although Moore and Russell certainly held true propositions to be identical with facts, they did not regard an assertion of the identity thesis either as defining truth or as explaining what truth consists in. If they offered a definition of anything, it was a definition of *reality*:

> So far, indeed, from truth being defined by reference to reality, reality can only be defined by reference to truth: for truth denotes exactly that property of the complex formed by two entities and their relation, in virtue of which, if the entity predicated be existence, we call the complex real – the property, namely, expressed by saying that the relation in question does truly or really hold between the entities. (Moore 1902, p. 21)

A fact is defined as a true proposition, so to say that a proposition is true because it is identical with a fact is obviously circular. To be sure, we have a position hostile to that taken by correspondence theorists, but what results is not an explanation of truth to rival either that offered by either a correspondence theorist or a *facts-first* robust identity theorist. Moore and Russell's robust identity theory of truth is, we might say, not a *facts-first*, but a *proposition-first*, robust identity theory.

Where does the correspondence theorist err, according to Moore and Russell? Not in his conception of facts as states of affairs. By contrast with the diagnosis offered by a modest identity theorist, Moore and Russell took the correspondence theorist's mistake to be merely that of failing to appreciate that propositions are states of affairs too. And we can see the rationale for this criticism. For once propositions are construed as states of affairs, a fact cannot be distinct from the true proposition which a correspondence theorist takes to correspond to it; there is nothing else for a fact to *be* but a proposition which is true. Russell and Moore thus end up with a view of facts identical to that of the correspondence theorist; but, given their view of propositions, the relation holding between a true proposition and a fact can only be that of identity.

Some commentators have taken the fact that Moore and Russell do not *define* truth as identity to fact to show that it is wrong to describe their position as an identity theory at all.[5] But I think this would be a mistake, since it rests on the assumption that a theory of truth must either aim at definition, or else at least come up with an explanation of the distinction between truth and falsehood. A point I stressed in discussing the modest identity theory in Chapter 5 is that a statement of an identity claim, though in itself circular, may yet have lying behind it an illuminating *conception* of truth. And this is the case with Moore and Russell's position. For one thing, they take a stand (albeit the wrong stand) on the nature of the vehicles of truth. Furthermore, the identification of facts and true propositions forms the basis of Moore and Russell's rejection of correspondence theories; so although truth is taken to be indefinable, and although the distinction between truth

and falsehood is unexplained, the identification of facts with true propositions constitutes an attack upon the metaphysical picture so beloved by correspondence theorists. This, it seems to me, means that there is no harm in thinking of Moore and Russell's position as an identity *theory* of truth even though, in their case, it is coupled with the (supposed) insight that truth is a simple, unanalyzable property. If they are correct, Moore and Russell provide a diagnosis and antidote to the conception of truth as correspondence.

2.2 But Russell and Moore are not correct. The first reason why this is so can be put concisely: given the arguments of Chapters 2, 3 and 4, a modest identity theory is compulsory. Propositions are thoughts (things with modes of presentation as constituents), and facts are thoughts that are true. The correct response to the correspondence theorist is, not to identify her facts with true propositions, but to put facts in the realm of sense.

The second problem with Moore and Russell's robust identity theory concerns falsehood. We noted in Chapter 3 that if propositions are construed as states of affairs, it is unclear how propositions can be false. Since Russell and Moore work with precisely this conception of propositions, merely additionally identifying facts with true propositions, we should expect them to be afflicted by a version of the same problem. And so they are. The literature on identity theories of truth abounds with discussion of what has become known as 'Moore's Problem' (Candlish 1995, p. 116). But as we shall now see, although the problem would seem to be debilitating, there is a lack of clarity among commentators as to what exactly is wrong with what a robust identity theorist has to say about falsehood.

Even if the precise nature of the robust identity theorist's trouble with falsehood is hard to ascertain, the *cause* of the trouble is easy to spot. And it is here that we can begin our investigation. If, as the robust identity theorist believes, true propositions are arrangements of real entities, then false propositions must be non-actual arrangements of such entities: what Russell refers to as 'objective falsehoods' (1910, p. 152) and what we may think of as unactualized states of affairs. Given that truth and falsehood must receive a uniform treatment and, hence, that true propositions and false propositions must be of the same ontological category, it follows that a robust identity theory of truth must be accompanied by an identity theory of falsehood. Without doubt, there is something suspicious about this view; ultimately we shall see that it has dire consequences. None the less, as we shall now see, commentators

have had difficulty putting their finger on just what it is that is so objectionable about it.

It is tempting to think that the problem lies simply with the ontological commitment to such unactualized states of affairs. Many will, no doubt, regard non-actual arrangements of objects as *entia non grata* because they seem to represent a kind of metaphysical extremism which offends against common sense. Baldwin, for example, believes that all one need do to show the view to be incorrect is explain it. A commitment to such things is, he claims, 'bound to be unwanted': after all, '[t]hey need to have, so to speak, all the substance of actual states of affairs, but just to lack their actuality' (Baldwin 1991a, p. 46).[6] But what is so wrong with an ontological commitment to false objectives? Baldwin himself notes the analogy between false objectives (possible states of affairs) and David Lewis's possible worlds (Baldwin 1991a, p. 46). Given that an 'incredulous stare' (ibid., p. 46) is insufficient to threaten a realist concerning possible worlds, there is no reason why we should expect such a stare to unsettle someone who is, so to speak, a realist about possible states of affairs. Furthermore, certain correspondence theorists posit such non-actual arrangements of objects and properties to serve as the relata of false propositions (Taylor 1985; Forbes 1986), so perhaps it is not so odd to identify such things with false propositions. Looking askance at objective falsehoods does not constitute an argument against admitting them into our ontology.

Of course, Russell's own dissatisfaction with the conception of false propositions as non-actual states of affairs caused him to rethink judgment and truth and settle (for a while, at least) upon his 'multiple relation theory of judgment' (Russell 1910, 1912). However, his own two objections to his earlier view also fail to properly diagnose its unsatisfactoriness. His first reason for abandoning his earlier identity theory was that a belief in the existence of false objectives is 'in itself almost incredible: we feel there could be no falsehood if there were no minds to make mistakes' (1910, p. 152). But as Cartwright has commented (1987, p. 80), this would just seem to rest upon an error. It is, of course, true that it could not be thought that 2 + 2 = 5, if there were no one to think it. But, presumably, anyone who (like Russell) has realist sympathies would wish to claim that it would still be false that 2 + 2 = 5 in a mindless world; a thesis which amounts to the claim that the *content* of an act of thinking that 2 + 2 = 5 – the proposition – is a mind-independent entity whose truth-value is determined solely by how things are. The problem with a robust identity theory cannot be, as Russell seems to be suggesting, that it posits false propositions *at all*; it must

lie with its own peculiar conception of them as non-actual states of affairs.

The second objection raised by Russell fares no better. The problem with a commitment to unactualized states of affairs is, argues Russell, that 'it leaves the difference between truth and falsehood quite inexplicable' (1910, p. 152), a theme to which he returns in his 1913. It is, he says,

> very difficult to believe that there are objective falsehoods, which would subsist and form part of the universe even if there were no such thing as thought or mind. But the chief objection is that the difference between truth and falsehood, on the theory in question, has to be accepted as ultimate and inexplicable, whereas it seems obvious that the difference between truth and falsehood must be explicable by reference to *fact*, i.e. to what is actually in the universe whatever we may see fit to believe. (Russell 1913, p. 153)

There are, however, two reasons why this does not explain our feeling of dissatisfaction with such non-actual states of affairs. First of all, it begs the question against Russell's earlier view. The Russell of 1903–4 would simply reply by saying that truth cannot be explained as correspondence to fact because a fact is nothing more than a proposition which has the simple, unanalyzable property of truth. Second, and most importantly, the objection is *not* an objection to an ontological commitment to unactualized states of affairs; it is an objection to the thesis that truth is unanalyzable. It is easy to see why Russell ran the two doctrines together: they were both elements of his early system. But they need not accompany each other. Reconsider, for a moment, the *facts-first* robust identity theory sketched briefly at the beginning of the present section. This theory, remember, starts with a conception of facts as states of affairs and then identifies true propositions with such items. On such a view, the notion of a fact is the fundamental one, the concepts of a proposition and of truth being elucidated in terms of this fundamental concept. Here we have a robust identity theory, and a theory which has to treat false propositions as non-actual arrangements of real objects, but which does not treat truth as unanalyzable. On the contrary, because the notion of a fact is basic, truth can be *explained* as identity to fact. The moral to be drawn is that a commitment to false objectives is distinct from a commitment to the unanalyzability thesis. Hence an objection to the latter cannot tell against the former.[7]

So what really lies at the root of our (justified) dissatisfaction with a conception of a false proposition as an unactualized state of affairs?

What, in other words, is Moore's Problem? The answer refers back to the discussion of the Russellian conception of propositions in Chapter 3, §4. The reason why Moore and Russell cannot satisfactorily account for falsehood is *not* that the postulation of false objectives is beyond the metaphysical pale, nor because the difference between truth and falsehood is left unexplained; it is because it is impossible for an objective – a Russellian proposition – to *be* false.

The reason why Moore and Russell's identity theory of falsehood cannot work is simple and, in the light of the discussion in Chapter 3, familiar. If propositions are states of affairs – entities which have as constituents the things they are about – the only available explanation of propositional unity entails that 'false propositions' cannot be unified and, hence, cannot be genuine propositions. By way of illustration, let us, with Russell, consider the proposition that *A* differs from *B*. How can the proposition differ from a mere list of its constituents: *A*, *B* and the relation of difference? The only available answer would seem to be the one which Russell actually provides:

> The constituents of this proposition, if we analyze it, appear to be only *A*, difference, *B*. Yet these constituents, thus placed side by side, do not reconstitute the proposition. The difference which occurs in the proposition *actually relates A and B* [my italics], whereas the difference after analysis is a notion which has no connection with *A* and *B*. (1903, p. 50)

But' as Cartwright remarks, 'if the difference that occurs in the proposition actually relates *A* and *B*, then surely *A* really does differ from *B* – in which event it cannot be false that *A* differs from *B*' (1987, p. 84). Once propositions are identified with states of affairs, there cannot be false propositions. False objectives cannot be propositions at all: they can only be aggregates. To be unities, as opposed to aggregates, they would have to be unified; but such things cannot be unified without being true.

This, then, is Moore's problem: it is not simply that Moore and Russell have to regard false propositions as non-actual states of affairs (although they do, of course); it is that such things simply cannot *be* propositions. On Moore and Russell's view, genuine (that is to say, *unified*) propositions can only be true.

As we have noted already, Russell's own response was to adopt his 'multiple relation theory of judgment' (Russell 1910, 1912): an account according to which judgment is not a binary relation between a mind and a state of affairs but a multiple relation between a mind and the

things that would normally be considered to be the state of affairs' constituents. In effect, it is a retreat to the metaphysics of correspondence: an act of judgment is true if the entities which the judgment is about are combined into the appropriate fact, and false otherwise. Furthermore, the problem of how a proposition is false is neatly side-stepped by a simple denial that there are such things as propositions. It is the propositional act of judgment which brings together in thought things that may not be so unified in the world (Candlish 1996, p. 109).

Infamously, the multiple relation theory seems to make the judgment of nonsense possible (Hylton 1984, pp. 386–7); moreover, it is quite obscure how an act of judgment may unite worldly objects which are not really so united (Hylton 1990, p. 346). But, in any case, we should not have been tempted by such a move. Given that a robust identity theory cannot allow for false propositions, the cogent response is not to abolish propositions while holding on to a questionable view of facts. Such a view persists in misconstruing facts as creatures of the realm of reference. The way out is to follow Frege in taking propositions to have senses as constituents, and then to harmlessly identify facts with true propositions thus conceived. In other words, we should reject, not merely the correspondence theorist's conception of the relation holding between true propositions and facts, but with it her view of the relation's second term. With the conception of facts as states of affairs in place, Russell finds himself perched upon a see-saw whose end points are correspondence and robust identity. Frege shows us how to get off safely.

3. Bradley

3.1 Let us leave now leave Cambridge for Oxford. In his 1907 Bradley puts his case against correspondence theories of truth, and for his own, *facts-first* (or, perhaps better, *reality-first*), robust identity theory. According to Bradley, once correspondence theories have been properly scrutinized, it becomes clear that

> [t]he division of reality from knowledge and of knowledge from truth must in any form be abandoned. And the only way of exit from the maze is to accept the remaining alternative. Our one hope lies in taking courage to embrace the result that reality is not outside truth. The identity of truth, knowledge and reality, whatever difficulty that may bring, must be taken as necessary and fundamental. . . . [I]f we are to advance, we must accept once and for all the identification of truth with reality. (1907, pp. 112–13)

As I mentioned in the previous section, two points of clarification need to be made about Bradley's eventual position. First, Bradley has his own idiosyncratic views about the nature of the terms of the identity relation. As Candlish has noted (1995, p. 118), Bradley takes a true proposition (or, as he would say, a true 'judgment') to be identical with *reality* rather than with a state of affairs: Bradley, as we shall see, rejects the idea that reality can be divided up into states of affairs. Second, for Bradley, the reality with which a true judgment is identical is *experience*. We should not forget that Bradley is an idealist. None the less, Bradley should still be thought of as a facts-first, robust identity theorist: he starts with a conception of reality (as experience), and then argues for the claim that a true judgment must be identical with reality thus conceived.

3.2 Why does Bradley suppose that we must replace what he calls the 'copy theory' of truth (ibid., p. 107) with his own identity theory? The 'fatal objection' to the copy theory, in Bradley's eyes, is that the correspondence theorist's states of affairs are mythical entities projected onto the world as a result of judgment's abstractive character. As Bradley himself puts it, '[t]he merely given facts are . . . the imaginary creatures of false theory. They are manufactured by a mind which abstracts one aspect of the concrete known whole, and sets this abstracted aspect out by itself as a real thing' (ibid., p. 108). The correspondence theorist's belief that the world is the totality of states of affairs is just the product of invalidly extrapolating from the structure of thought to the structure of reality: of assuming that the world must contain things which resemble judgments.

Having put Bradley's case in this way, it might seem that he anticipates the worries with the correspondence theory which I raised in Chapter 1. But we should not be misled. Those worries centred around the correspondence theorist's claim that vehicles of truth are *made true* by states of affairs. I responded by denying that the truthmaking intuition is properly motivated, thereby undermining the conception of facts as states of affairs. Bradley's criticism is crucially different. I accept that thought is apt for representing the nature of reality accurately; I just deny that reality consists of truthmaking states of affairs. Bradley, by contrast, thinks that judgment, by its very nature, fails to capture how the world really is, and hence falsifies reality, because it *abstracts from its detail*. As Bradley himself explains, '[t]here are more ways than one of saying the thing that is not true. It is not always necessary to go beyond the facts. It is often more than enough to come short of them' (Bradley 1883, pp. 93–4). As Candlish explains, if Bradley is correct, 'we do not speak the truth if we say less than the situation we are talking

about would justify our saying, just as we do not speak the truth if we say more, or something entirely different' (Candlish 1989, p. 342).

Bradley's contention is thus that the essentially abstractive nature of judgment tells against a correspondence conception of truth. In taking the world to contain states of affairs which correspond to true judgments, the correspondence theorist overlooks the essentially abstractive, and hence falsifying, nature of judgment. What is not yet clear, however, is how identifying thought and reality is supposed to help matters.

In order to discover why Bradley considers his own identity theory to offer a way out, it may help to focus on the following, recognizably Bradleian, *reductio*.[8]

(1) All judgments abstract from reality.
(2) If a judgment abstracts from reality, it cannot represent reality exactly.
(3) For a judgment to be true, it must represent reality exactly.
So (4) No judgment can be true.

As we shall see, in Bradley's view, the only way of avoiding the *reductio*'s paradoxical conclusion is by adopting his identity theory.

Let us start our examination of the *reductio* by considering premise (1): the premise which Bradley takes to prove the downfall of correspondence theories. Thought, so Bradley believes, is by its nature abstractive, inevitably failing to capture the detail of concrete reality. As he explains it, '[t]hought is rational and discursive, and, if it ceases to be thus, it commits suicide; and yet if it remains thus, how does it contain immediate presentation?' (Bradley 1893, p. 150). To take an example familiar from the literature (Candlish 1989, p. 347), the judgment that the cup has coffee in it is abstractive in the following sense: it says nothing about, for example, the shape and size of the cup, the colour of the liquid or where the cup is situated. This being so, the judgment that the cup has coffee in it does not represent reality exactly (premise (2)). But given that a true judgment must represent reality exactly (premise (3)), this means that the judgment cannot be true.

Given that the conclusion should be resisted, we must work out where the argument has gone wrong. And it is at this point that Bradley's identity theory enters the fray. For, according to Bradley, there is yet a way of denying premise (1). There can be precisely one judgment which avoids abstraction; but this judgment can only be non-abstractive by virtue of *being identical with* the whole of reality. The only way in which a judgment can be true is by exactly representing the whole of reality; but, according to Bradley, a judgment can only do justice to the

whole of reality by actually *becoming* the reality it is supposed to be about (Candlish 1995, p. 119). Only if the judgment is identical with the whole of reality can it be the case that none of reality's detail is omitted.

Bradley himself notes that this position has a paradoxical flavour. If a true judgment *is* concrete, 'bodily' reality (Bradley 1907, p. 114), then it looks as though the achievement of truth has led to the elimination of the truth bearer: the judgment itself. As Candlish has claimed (1995, pp. 119–20), the most perspicuous way of expressing Bradley's view of truth is to say that reality is *all there is* (just as the best way of putting the claim of eliminativist materialism is that there are only brain states). If Bradley is correct, there is no such thing as a true judgment, only bodily reality, for 'if truth and fact are one, then in some such way thought must reach its consummation. But in that consummation thought has certainly been so transformed, that to go on calling it thought seems indefensible' (1893, p. 152). We thus seem to be presented with a dilemma: if we take a true judgment to be distinct from reality (as the correspondence theorist does), then there cannot be true judgments, since no judgment will represent reality exactly; but if we take Bradley's way out and accept his particular identity theory, we are taken 'straight to thought's suicide' (ibid., p. 150). Bradley believes that we have no option but to throw ourselves upon the dilemma's second horn.

3.3 In §2 we saw that Russell and Moore's robust identity theory was unable to account for falsehood. How does Bradley's theory fare on this score? Arguably, Bradley has the resources to avoid Moore's Problem. According to Candlish, Bradley's identity theory of truth may be coupled with 'a non-identity theory of falsehood' (1995, p. 119): falsehood, presumably, is a matter of a judgment's abstracting from the huge judgment which is identical with reality, and hence can be explained as a falling short of reality. Of course, such an account brings with it the doctrine that truth admits of degrees: a judgment is more or less true depending on its distance from the whole of reality. But whether or not we are spooked by such a view, Bradley still has a problem of sorts when it comes to falsehood, even if it is not Moore's Problem as such. For Bradley's theory entails that true judgments and false judgments are of distinct ontological types:[9] a false judgment is an abstracted content while a true judgment is concrete reality itself. There is something very odd about such an asymmetry. We tend to suppose that true and false judgments share the same ontological nature, and that the difference between them is determined by how the judgments stand to the way things are. This conception is supported by our intuitions concerning contingent truths and falsehoods. The judgment

that Bradley was born in Bolton is false but might have been true. But we surely do not want to say, as a believer in the Bradleian asymmetry must, that this entails that something which is abstract (the false judgment) might have been concrete. Given, as seems plausible, that being abstract is an essential property of an abstract thing, the Bradleian cannot account for contingent truths and falsehoods.

In fact, things get worse for Bradley's identity theory. As I have already noted, it is not so much an identity theory as an eliminativist theory: if a judgment achieves truth, the judgment disappears and reality is all there is. This prompts a powerful objection. For, as a consequence of its eliminative theory of true judgments, Bradley's 'identity theory of truth' paradoxically commits him to the doctrine that there are no truths. For there to be truth, there must exist something – a vehicle of truth – which is true. Truth, we saw in Chapter 3, is a property of truth bearers. So, if it is the case that truth sees the truth bearer disappear, what we have is not, strictly speaking, *truth*. As W.J. Mander puts it, 'describing our final product as "truth" presupposes the story of how we got there' (1994, p. 36). So it follows that if anything *really* is a judgment, it cannot be true, since what Bradley describes as a 'true judgment' is not really a judgment at all. This being so, Bradley has neither avoided the paradoxical conclusion of his own *reductio* nor succeeded in coming up with a genuine theory of truth to rival the correspondence theory. Although Bradley *appears* to respond to the *reductio* by denying its first premise, in fact he fails to do so. Judgments are still, by their very nature, abstractive precisely because what Bradley wants to call a 'true judgment' is not, strictly speaking, a judgment proper. And since, on Bradley's view, a judgment, when true, ceases to be a judgment, it turns out that what he offers us is, not so much a theory of truth, but a (putative) explanation of why a judgment *cannot* be true.

3.4 For Bradley to have ended up in such a paradoxical situation, something must have gone wrong with his reasoning. His diagnosis of the mistake made by the correspondence theorist, a diagnosis which leads directly to the view that a true judgment must *be* the whole of reality, must be mistaken. I intend to show just how resistible is Bradley's argument that correspondence theories must disintegrate into his own identity theory.

To this end, we should begin by returning to the first premise of Bradley's *reductio*: the claim that judgments abstract from reality. It is this alleged feature of judgment which, Bradley supposes, a judgment can

avoid having only by *becoming* the whole of reality. As I explained the first premise in my earlier brief sketch, the claim seems to be that judgments are *selective*: they point to facts (such as the cup's having coffee in it) but say nothing about other facts (such as the cup's being blue, or the coffee's being hot). However, such abstraction is harmful only if there is a mismatch between judgment and reality, only if the facts separated in thought are in reality indistinct. But why should a correspondence theorist accept that such a mismatch occurs? The facts of our example appear to be eminently separable: the cup could have coffee in it and yet the cup not be blue and the coffee not be hot. This being so, there seems little reason to accept the *reductio*'s second premise, namely that abstractive judgments do not represent reality exactly. Of course, a judgment such as that the cup has coffee in it does not represent reality *completely*: it does not state *all* of the facts. But it states one fact *exactly*. As yet, we have no reason to suppose that judgments must misrepresent reality.

A Bradleian could reply by pointing out that the correspondence theorist's facts, unlike physical objects, do not have boundaries: while one can precisely locate the cup and distinguish it from other things by virtue of its spatial location, one cannot do the same for the *fact* that the cup has coffee in it. Perceptual experience does not present the world as being divided up neatly into states of affairs, each corresponding to its true judgment. But the correspondence theorist can simply reply that this merely entails that states of affairs, though occupants of the world, are abstract rather than concrete. Once more, the objection only speaks to one particular correspondence theory of truth.

But perhaps the claim that judgment abstract from reality is rather more interesting than I have thus far supposed. At times, Bradley suggests that it is not so much the *selectivity* of judgment that is the problem, but that the constituents of a judgment – concepts – inevitably fail to do justice to the *fine-grained* nature of reality. In other words, Bradley might be interpreted as suggesting, that our concepts are just too roughhewn to represent reality's detail. Here we have a more radical thesis. It is not simply the case that 'truth fails . . . to include all the given facts' (1907, p. 115), but that 'the moment's felt immediacy remains for ever outstanding and, if we feel this nowhere else, we realize at each moment the difference between the knower and his truth' (ibid., p. 115).

Without doubt, this makes it a little less baffling as to why the supposed abstractive nature of judgment can seemingly be remedied only by the judgment actually *becoming* reality. Even if a judgment seemed

perfectly complete, apparently stating every fact in the universe, it would still fail to represent reality exactly because it would still be made up of *concepts*; and concepts, by their very nature, fail to represent the detail of reality precisely. But what are we to make of this?

It is undoubtedly true that our colour experience may present an object as being a certain shade for which we have no name such as 'red', pink' or 'reddish brown'. As McDowell says, '[s]uch words and phrases express concepts of bands on the spectrum, whereas . . . [the] . . . thought is that colour experience can present properties that correspond to something more like lines on the spectrum, with no discernible width' (1994, p. 56). As a result, a judgment as to an object's colour which makes use of colour names may fail to do justice to how the object really looks.

However, if this is the sort of case that Bradley has in mind, it cannot really help him argue that the *reductio* can only be avoided by embracing his identity theory. For the fact that we have no name for a certain shade does not entail that we have no *concept* of it. McDowell makes precisely the right point in this regard: one counts as having a concept of a given shade so long as one can pick it out with a phrase such as 'that shade', distinguish it from other shades, and use the phrase 'that shade' to call it to mind even when one is not at that moment presented with it (ibid., pp. 56–7). None of this presupposes that one has a special colour word for the shade.

Furthermore, even if we take the sort of example we are presently considering to support Bradley's case, it cannot do the job of making good the claim of the *reductio*, namely that *all* judgments (which are not identical with reality) are abstractive. For the fact that we may not have concepts of certain shades that we can discriminate does not mean that *all* of our colour concepts are abstractive. Perhaps those expressed by names we find on colour charts (names such as 'waterfall', 'dove grey' and 'plum crazy') carve up nature as finely as we perceive it. And when we move away from the case of colour, we find that the phenomenon that has been bothering us – that of experiences which seem to transcend our concepts – is much less widespread. The judgment that the cup has coffee in it, or that Bradley was a fellow of Merton College, do not seem to contain concepts which abstract from reality in our second sense.

The moral is this. If a judgment's being abstractive means that it is *selective* in the sense expressed earlier, then the second premise of the *reductio* is false: a judgment may state a fact precisely even if it says nothing about other facts. If, on the other hand, a judgment's being abstractive amounts to the claim that it involves concepts which are rougher-hewn

than our experience, then the first premise is false: not all judgments are abstractive in this sense. In either case, we need feel no pressure to embrace Bradley's identity theory in order to avoid the *reductio*'s conclusion.

3.5 The claim that all judgments abstract from reality is thus either anodyne or else capable of being refuted without recourse to Bradley's identity theory. But it seems to me that we should also take issue with the *reductio*'s third premise: the claim that a judgment must represent reality *exactly* in order to be true. If, for the sake of argument, we were to grant that our colour concepts are less fine-grained than our experience of colour, it would follow that our colour judgments fail to represent the colours of things exactly. But it would not follow that all of our colour judgments are false. If something is a shade of blue for which we have no name, it is none the less blue. So the judgment that it is blue is true. How could anyone be blind to this?

The answer lies, I think, in an intuition which manifests itself in a particular way of thinking of the relation of correspondence. For if it is supposed that a judgment can only correspond to reality by *picturing* it, it becomes hard to think how a judgment could do justice to the reality's detail without being identical with it. Given that a judgment cannot be a mirror image of the world one may become tempted to think that a judgment can only be true by *disappearing into* reality. Correspondence, thus construed, looks in danger of collapsing into Bradleian coincidence. But we noted in Chapters 1 and 5 that it is not an essential feature of a correspondence theory that the relation of correspondence be conceived of in this way. All that need be claimed is that true judgments are *correlated* with states of affairs. We would do well to remember the following remark made by Austin:

> There is no need whatsoever for the words used in making a true statement to 'mirror' in any way, however direct, any feature whatsoever of the situation or event; a statement no more needs, in order to be true, to reproduce the 'multiplicity', say, or the 'structure' or 'form' of reality, than a word needs to be echoic or writing pictographic. (1950, p. 24)

If we heed Austin's words, the third premise of the *reductio* is revealed to be uncompulsory, and we are given another reason for resisting Bradley's move from correspondence to his own distinctive identity theory. Of course, none of this means that a correspondence theorist should feel satisfied with her position. All that has been demonstrated is the unsoundness of *Bradley's* argument against correspondence theories and in

favour of his own peculiar identity theory. In the light of the arguments of Chapter 5, we can say the following. Correspondence theories fail, not because the abstractive nature of judgment entails that the correspondence theorist's facts are 'the imaginary creatures of false theory'; it is because facts are, *pace* correspondence theorists, true thoughts. And to say this is to adopt an identity theory which, unlike Bradley's, is modest.

4. Hornsby

4.1 The final identity theory I wish to consider is that defended more recently by Jennifer Hornsby (1997, 1999). Hornsby's position is, she says (1997, p. 1), a development of the sort of view propounded by McDowell (1994),[10] a view which McDowell himself explains like this:

> [T]here is no ontological gap between the sort of thing one can . . . think, and the sort of thing that can be the case. When one thinks truly, what one thinks *is* what is the case . . . [T]here is no gap between thought, as such, and the world. (1994, p. 27)

Hornsby takes this to mean that true propositions (which both she (1997, p. 2) and McDowell (1994, p. 179) call 'thinkables') are the same as facts. And it is this identity thesis, along with its accompanying conception of truth, that she wishes to defend.

Of course, before we can go any further, we must know more about the respective terms of the identity relation. Identity claims risk being vacuous unless something is said about the things being identified. When it comes to facts, Hornsby, like McDowell, is fond of alluding to a famous remark made by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922). The world, says Hornsby (quoting McDowell who, in turn, is paraphrasing Wittgenstein), is 'everything that is the case'; it is 'a constellation of facts' (1997, p. 2). What does this tell us about Hornsby's conception of facts? Well, the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* held a correspondence theory of truth and his notion of a fact reflects this. Objects, according to Wittgenstein, are the basic atoms of the world: the world's substance (1922, §2.021). These objects are arranged in states of affairs, a state of affairs being nothing more than a combination of objects (ibid., §2.01); and a fact is a state of affairs which obtains or, as Wittgenstein himself puts it, exists (ibid., §2). The world is thus divided up into facts (ibid., §1.2) – arrangements of objects – and a proposition is true just in case the state of affairs it depicts obtains; just in case, that is, it pictures a fact (ibid., §2.222).

Naturally, Hornsby should not be interpreted as committing herself to the precise details of Wittgenstein's account. And it goes without saying that she should not be viewed as endorsing a correspondence theory of truth: we have agreed already that the major purpose of holding an identity theory is to highlight what is wrong with the correspondence theorist's conception. None the less, if Hornsby really believes what Wittgenstein meant by his respective claims that the world 'is all that is the case' (ibid., §1) and that the world is 'the totality of facts, not of things' (ibid., §1.1), then she shares Wittgenstein's conception of facts, if not his view of the relation between facts and true propositions. In other words, in believing that the world is the totality of facts, Hornsby supposes facts to be as a correspondence theorist conceives of them. She takes facts to be states of affairs, and hence her identity theory is a robust one.

On the nature of facts, then, things would seem to be pretty clear (although, as we shall see presently, Hornsby believes that the portrait I have just painted misrepresents her). As for thinkables, although Hornsby herself says little about their ontological nature in her 1997, I interpret her initial silence on the matter to be an endorsement of McDowell's explicit claim that thinkables are located in the realm of sense rather than the realm of reference:

> Given the identity between what one thinks (when one's thought is true) and what is the case, to conceive the world as everything that is the case (as in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, §1) is to incorporate the world into what figures in Frege as the realm of sense. The realm of sense (*Sinn*) contains thoughts in the sense of what can be thought (thinkables) as opposed to acts or episodes of thinking. The identity displays facts, things that are the case, as thoughts in that sense – the thinkables that are the case. (McDowell 1994, p. 179)

I thus read Hornsby as supposing thinkables to be *thoughts*: entities with modes of presentation of objects, and not objects themselves, as constituents. And Hornsby is later willing to accept this characterization (1999, p. 3). Consequently, as the extract from McDowell suggests, it looks like the claimed identity is between an item from the realm of reference (a state of affairs) and an item from the realm of sense (a true thought).[11]

Having said this, Hornsby's claim, again following McDowell (1994, p. 27), is that the identity between true thinkables and facts is *truistic*. Indeed, the simple statement of identity between true thinkables and facts is, she says, 'not supposed to tell us anything illuminating' (1997, p. 2); it 'embodies nothing metaphysically contentious' (ibid., p. 9).

Nevertheless, the theory, as distinct from the simple identity claim, is said by Hornsby to be substantial, and we can discern three reasons why Hornsby takes this to be so. The first such reason can hardly be argued with: Hornsby's identity theory takes a stand on what the vehicles of truth are (ibid., p. 3). The second reason, however, brings us into more contentious terrain. For Hornsby's claim is that her identity theory constitutes a (justified) rejection of the picture of mind/world relations which she takes to be foisted upon us by correspondence theorists: a picture in which 'an ontological gap between thought and the world opens up' (ibid., p. 8). Let me say a little more about this.

As we have noted, Hornsby seems to be in agreement with the correspondence theorist that facts are worldly items. Her target appears to be the conception of such facts as things which are located 'outside the realm of thinkables' (ibid., p. 7), where this means that a fact cannot enter the mind but only match something in the mind. Unsurprisingly, given Hornsby's acknowledged debt to McDowell, this amounts to a recapitulation of McDowell's own objection to a conception of truth as correspondence. According to McDowell, the correspondence theorist conceives of the world as independent of our thought about it, as beyond the 'outer boundary of the space of concepts' (1994, p. 8). As a result, McDowell claims, the correspondence theorist is committed to 'the myth of the given': the view that the world is 'simply received in experience' (ibid., p. 6) without mediation by concepts.

If the preceding picture of Hornsby's view is correct (which, we shall see, is strenuously denied by her), the vantage point afforded us by her identity theory enables us to explain what is wrong with conceiving of truth as correspondence: facts are not things that the world takes sole responsibility for (1997, p. 8); on the contrary, the things which a correspondence theorist takes to be 'outside the realm of thinkables' (ibid., p. 7) are nothing but thinkables which are true. As Hornsby puts it (ibid., p. 2), quoting McDowell, if the identity theory is correct 'there is no gap between thought, as such, and the world' (McDowell 1994, p. 27). The world of facts (that is, the world of states of affairs) is swallowed up by the realm of sense.

The third reason why Hornsby takes her identity theory to be substantial is that, in her own words, it 'protects us against the deflationary attitude towards truth which one finds in some contemporary philosophers' (1999, p. 1). Hornsby supposes that light can be shed on the notion of a thinkable, if we consider the project of providing theories of meaning for natural languages. For theories of meaning, she explains, 'treat of thinkables' composition' (1997, p. 12). And it is at this point

that she takes up the Davidsonian idea that interpretational truth-theories may serve as theories of meaning for natural languages. Hornsby believes that the role she envisages for truth, as an interpretational property, renders her conception of truth incompatible with deflationism and, what is more, illustrates the deficiency of the latter.

If I understand her correctly, the argument goes like this. Inasmuch as truth is an interpretational property, it is essentially connected with psychological concepts, notably *belief* and *desire*. Hornsby makes it clear that 'an interpretive account is not narrowly linguistic' (ibid., p. 13). To interpret a speaker's production of sentences, one must have some sense of the purpose with which she produced the sentence, and this means that one must form hypotheses about the speaker's mental states. But, argues Hornsby, one

> cannot generally take a view about what someone's purposes are without having some view of which of those purposes are achieved; people intentionally do what they try to do to the extent that the beliefs which explain their doing what they do are true (are believings of true thinkables, that is)' (ibid., p. 13).

Needless to say, this means that an interpretive account requires a 'grasp of the distinction involved in assessments of thinkables as true or false' (ibid., pp. 13–14). And it is at this point that the incompatibility with deflationism, and, indeed, the error in deflationism, is supposedly revealed. Hornsby's charge is that the deflationist is quite unable to say anything true, yet deflationary about the distinction which 'is true' records. The deflationist must either deny that there is any distinction involved in assessments of thinkables as true or false, or else must take the distinction to be implicit in some gloss on

(E) <*p*> is true if and only if *p*

that he might offer (ibid., pp. 21–2). But according to Hornsby, the first option is a denial of obvious fact, whilst the second comes up against the objection first made by Wright (1992, ch. 1): any attempt to provide such a gloss will inevitably inflate the concept beyond the point acceptable to deflationists. As Hornsby puts it, 'unless a gloss on (E) has the sort of platitudinous ring that "fact" carries, it will be bound to spoil the deflationary message' (ibid., p. 22).

This, then, is my initial characterization of Hornsby's identity theory. It would seem to occupy a distinctive area of metaphysical space, repudiating both correspondence and deflationary theories of truth. In the

next section I shall argue that, as interpreted along the lines suggested, Hornsby's rejection of correspondence theories leads to incoherence. In §§4.3 and 4.4 I shall examine Hornsby's reply to this objection: a reply which suggests that she views her identity theory as modest rather than robust. However, I shall argue that a reinterpretation of her identity theory as the kind of modest theory which I endorsed in Chapter 5 means that it cannot occupy the metaphysical space she has reserved for it.

4.2 Is Hornsby's identity theory robust? To put the question another way, are her facts worldly states of affairs? Hornsby is reluctant to think of robust theories as identity theories at all (1997, note 5), and later explicitly says that her theory is modest rather than robust (1999, pp. 2–3); but, none the less, there is strong evidence for supposing her theory to be a robust one. First and foremost, as we noted in §2 above, Hornsby appears to follow McDowell (who, in turn, claims he is following Wittgenstein) in regarding facts as states of affairs: entities whose constituents number worldly objects. This Wittgensteinian conception of facts, apparently endorsed by McDowell and accepted by Hornsby, has it that facts are arrangements of objects whose totality constitutes the world. Hence, Hornsby's identity theory would seem to have more in common with the identity theories held by Russell and Moore than with the identity theory I recommend. In identifying facts with true thinkables, it appears that Hornsby, like Russell and Moore, identifies true thinkables with worldly entities, and hence preserves the correspondence theorist's idea that complete true thinkables have worldly relata.

Further evidence for the robustness of Hornsby's identity theory is provided by her diagnosis of the fault with correspondence theories: that feature of correspondence theories which it is the *raison d'être* of her identity theory to repudiate. We saw in §4.1 that Hornsby thinks the definitive mistake made by a correspondence theorist to be that of committing herself to the view that the world (of facts) lies beyond the realm of thought. For the moment, I will not challenge this diagnosis. What is interesting about it is that, if correct, it demands a particular response. For if the correspondence theorist introduces a philosophically suspect ontological gap between thought and the world, the mistake can only be rectified by closing it. The world must be a (literally) thinkable world. But this is not the sort of move that could be made by a modest identity theorist. According to a modest identity theorist, facts are not to be found in the world: they are located in the realm of sense rather than the realm of reference. Consequently, in saying that facts are the same as true thoughts, a modest identity theorist cannot close

the gap between mind and world supposedly opened by a correspondence theorist. She has nothing to say about mind/world relations. She only *could* have something to say on this subject if the things identified with true propositions were worldly items, and this is precisely what she denies. Consequently, if, like Hornsby, we see the job of our identity theory as being that of sorting out mind/world relations, our identity theory can only be robust.

What follows, if Hornsby's identity theory is robust rather than modest? One thing is for certain: *pace* Hornsby, her identification of facts with true thinkables cannot be truistic. Hornsby quotes, with approval (1997, p. 2), the following remarks made by McDowell:

> [T]o say that there is no gap between thought, as such, and the world, is just to dress up a truism in high-flown language. All the point comes to is that one can think, for instance, *that spring has begun*, and that the very same thing, that spring has begun, can be the case. That is truistic, and it cannot embody something metaphysically contentious . . . (McDowell 1994, p. 27)

But we should not be misled by this. The truism is that we can think that spring has begun, and that spring has begun can be the case: we can use the very same words to specify what is thought and what is a fact. But it is a substantive philosophical thesis to say that what is thought is (when true) literally identical with a fact. Indeed, how could it be anything *but* a substantial thesis. After all, both McDowell and Hornsby believe that the whole purpose of propounding the theory is to pitch in to the substantive debate concerning the merits of the correspondence theory's conception of mind/world relations. I do not understand how Hornsby's identity theory could do this, if it were nothing but a truism.

Things, however, get worse. As it turns out, the identity theory which I have interpreted Hornsby as holding turns out to be incoherent.[12] For facts (as Hornsby appears to think of them) and thinkables (as Hornsby takes them to be) are of different ontological categories: occupiers of the realm of reference and the realm of sense respectively. If the world is everything that is the case, then the things that are the case – facts – must be states of affairs: things with objects and properties as constituents. Thinkables, meanwhile, if they are to be occupants of the realm of sense, must have modes of presentation as constituents. They must be thoughts. Consequently, Hornsby's identification of facts with true (Fregean) thinkables cannot be made good. A state of affairs cannot be a Fregean thought. A mode of presentation, the sort of thing which can be

a constituent of a thought, is *of* an object; it cannot be identified with it. Hornsby's identity theory appears to be a strange hybrid of two other identity theories: her facts are essentially those of Russell and Moore's robust theory, while her thinkables are the Fregean thoughts of a modest theory. To effect an identity between such things is an impossible task.

4.3 My point is this: if Hornsby's identity theory is supposed to be robust, it ends up being incoherent. Once we take Hornsby's Wittgensteinian remarks about facts seriously, it is plain that facts cannot, on pain of self-contradiction, be identified with true thoughts. However, in a later response to this objection (1999), Hornsby is at pains to deny that facts are entities with objects and properties as constituents. She argues that her claim that 'the world is a constellation of facts' is *compatible* with the claim that facts are as Frege takes them to be: true thoughts: occupants of the realm of sense. Critics who suppose her identity theory to be robust have, she supposes, simply read too much into the Wittgensteinian aphorism:

> I take facts to be misconceived by the correspondence theorist. But I do not take them to be misconceived by someone who sees a point in saying that 'the world is a constellation of facts'. So I cannot allow the move from one conception to the other which Dodd makes on my behalf . . . Different ideas may be introduced by 'the world', of course; and correspondence theorists have their own ideas. But the point here is only that I could scarcely have used 'the world' in a way that entitled Dodd to conclude that I place facts in 'the realm of reference'. Perhaps one should quote *Tractatus* 1.1 in full: 'The world is the totality of facts, *not of things*' (my italics). (1999, p. 2)

Hornsby's identity theory is, she now explains, modest (ibid., p. 3), although allegedly still more substantial than the conception of truth championed by deflationists (ibid., p. 6).

On the face of it, however, this attempt at clarification seems only to produce a distinctive, but barely intelligible, claim about the nature of the world. If it is correct to say that the world is the totality of facts, and if it is also correct to say, with Hornsby (ibid., p. 3), that the constituents of facts are not objects but modes of presentation of objects, a strange-looking conclusion appears to follow: objects are not in the world. Hence the italicization of 'not of things' in Hornsby's quotation of *Tractatus* 1.1. What can we say about this?

The first thing worth noting is that *Tractatus* 1.1 cannot help Hornsby's case. Hornsby supposes Wittgenstein's remark to support her twin

claims that facts are true thoughts (occupants of the realm of sense) and that the world is the totality of facts. But Wittgenstein's position suggests nothing of the sort. In particular, contrary to what Hornsby seems to think, *Tractatus* 1.1 does not see Wittgenstein using 'the world' in a way which excludes things from counting as being worldly. Far from it. As Wittgenstein himself explains, '[a] state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects (things)' (1922, §2.01). This being so, we could insert the word 'merely' after 'not' in order to clarify the point being made by *Tractatus* 1.1: its purpose is *not* to make a case for facts being, as Hornsby supposes, intensional entities which are none the less in the world; it is to make the quite different case for the world not, so to speak, consisting of merely a heap of objects. The early Wittgenstein's world consists of objects concatenated into states of affairs. Such states of affairs are occupants of the realm of reference, for they have objects ('things') as constituents. Consequently, nothing Wittgenstein says supports Hornsby's claim that the world is a constellation of true thoughts.

The point I have just made is not simply one of Wittgenstein scholarship. For it is crucial to Hornsby's response to the charge of incoherence that she be able to explain how she can couple the claim that the world is a constellation of facts with the thesis that facts are true thoughts. The appeal to Wittgenstein was supposed to help her in this task. We have seen that Wittgenstein cannot come to her aid. However, at this point, Hornsby may repeat her observation that '[d]ifferent ideas may be introduced by "the world"' (1999, p. 2). Even if *Tractatus* 1.1 cannot show us how to marry the claim that the world is a constellation of facts with an account of facts as true thoughts, is not Hornsby free to reserve 'the world' for the totality of true thoughts? I do not see how she can be. For it can only be misleading to say that the true thought that the book is red is in the world, but that the book itself is not. I think most people would agree that a rough approximation of what is meant by 'the world' has it that the world is made up of the things our thoughts are *about*. Upon recognizing that thoughts themselves may be the objects of thoughts, a decision then has to be made concerning whether this account of worldliness must be amended to exclude thoughts. I believe it must, since it is only if we make such an amendment that we can capture an important and intuitive distinction: that between reality and our thought about it. This is why I make use of a notion of the *realm of reference*, where this is understood to contain the things we think about minus thoughts and their constituents.[13] Having said this, such niceties need not be entered into at this point. For the idea that the world contains only facts, and not objects, is an

extraordinary case of playing fast and loose with semantics. *This* understanding of 'the world', and not mine, as Hornsby alleges (ibid., p. 2), is a philosophical invention.

So my charge is this: if Hornsby really wants her identity theory to be modest, she must drop the talk of the world being the totality of facts. The problem for Hornsby, though, is that dropping the Wittgensteinian way of thinking about facts can only thwart the aims, as she sees them, of her identity theory. Let us see why.

First of all, we have seen already that Hornsby shares with McDowell the aim of showing that 'there cannot be an ontological gap between thoughts ("an idea") and the world ("something real")' (1997, p. 6). As McDowell puts it,

> *That things are thus and so* is the conceptual content of an experience, but if the subject of the experience is not misled, that very same thing, *that things are thus and so*, is also a perceptible fact, an aspect of the perceptible world. (McDowell 1994, p. 26)

But if a fact is 'something real', 'an aspect of the perceptible world', it cannot be a true thought. True thoughts are not part of the perceptible world, though everyday concrete objects are, of course. What this shows is that McDowell and Hornsby, though Hornsby denies it, are inevitably drawn to the Tractarian conception of facts. And, given the remarks made in §4.2 above, we know why: only if facts are inhabitants of the realm of reference can an identity theory put mind/world relations straight. An identification of facts and true thinkables can only provide us with openness to reality, if a fact is, in Hornsby's words, 'something real' and not a mode of presentation of something real.

The second explanation for Hornsby's gravitation towards the conception of facts as states of affairs, and a consequent robust identity theory of truth, is this: only if her identity theory is robust can Hornsby make good her project of taking a stand against deflationism. As we saw in Chapters 5 and 6, a truly modest identity theory is compatible with the deflationary attitude. Recall that a modest identity theory reminds us that facts cannot be the second term of a correspondence relation because facts are nothing but true thoughts. Such a reminder does not conflict with the deflationary claims that 'is true' is just a syntactic device and that there is no property *F* the having of which is what truth consists in. The only identity theory incompatible with deflationism is a (facts-first) robust one: an identity theory which takes facts to be states of affairs and which then reduces true propositions to facts thus

construed. Such an identity theory proposes that *being identical with a state of affairs* is the non-platitudinous feature which all and only the true propositions have in common.

As we noted in §4.1, however, Hornsby argues that her identity theory is incompatible with, and reveals the inadequacy of, the deflationary attitude towards truth. If, as Hornsby supposes, her identity theory were modest, it would follow that I am wrong in my analysis of the logical relations between identity theories and deflationism. But Hornsby's argument (that set out at the end of §4.1 above) is unsound. *Pace* Hornsby (1997, pp. 13–14), nothing she says about truth's role in interpretation need be denied by a deflationist.

To see this, let us grant that interpretive accounts require one to have a grasp of the distinction involved in assessments of propositions as true or false. The crucial step comes next. To reiterate, Hornsby believes that the deflationist must either deny that there is any distinction between true and false propositions, a move which is plainly mistaken; or else he must take the distinction to be implicit in some gloss on the equivalence schema, in which case he will end up saying something inflationary about truth. But this particular dilemma's second horn does not present the danger to the deflationist that Hornsby supposes it to. For one thing, Hornsby's claim that a gloss on (E) will inevitably inflate the concept of truth relies on Wright's argument about normativity (ibid., p. 22), an argument which was exposed as unsound in Chapter 6, §8. For another, the deflationist may take the distinction between truth and falsehood to be implicit in the following gloss on (E): a proposition is true just in case things are as it says they are. Such a gloss acknowledges that *there is* a distinction between what is true and what is false, but does so without offering an *explanation* of this distinction; without, that is, uncovering a property *F* whose possession by a proposition is what its truth consists in. For this reason, such a gloss on (E) is perfectly acceptable by the deflationist's own lights. Hornsby seems to have confused the question of whether a deflationist can acknowledge that truth is distinct from falsehood (answer: yes) with the question whether this distinction admits of any substantial explanation (answer: no). This being so, she cannot argue soundly from the role of truth in interpretation to the inadequacy of deflationism.

4.4 When thinking about the nature of facts, Hornsby is pulled in two opposing directions, directions which represent the two horns of a dilemma which I mentioned in §4.1. On the one hand, and although she

explicitly denies it, Hornsby is pulled towards the view of facts as states of affairs. Only then can her identity theory make good the claim that there is no ontological gap between thought and the world (ibid., p. 6), where this means that a thought, if true, is literally the same thing as something in the world. Given the way in which Hornsby conceives of thinkables (as things with senses as constituents), it follows that the claimed identity between facts and true thinkables (as she understands the latter) is unintelligible.

On the other hand, Hornsby's explicit rejection of the view of facts as states of affairs (1999, p. 1), together with her equally explicit denial that her identity theory is robust (ibid., p. 3), indicates that she holds facts to be nothing more than true thoughts.[14] This, however, means that the theory cannot do what she wants it to: a modest identity theory, since it regards facts as true thoughts rather than as occupants of the world, says nothing about mind/world relations. Equally, such an identity theory cannot act as a bulwark against deflationism.

The way out of the dilemma should be clear to anyone who has accepted the arguments of this book. Hornsby should embrace a modest identity theory, accepting both that such a theory offers nothing positive on the subject of mind/world relations, and that the theory can (and, in the light of Chapter 6, *should*) sit side by side with a deflationary theory of truth. *Truth* is not the concept at which the battle over mind/world relations takes place. Of course, saying this is one thing; acting upon it is another. Hornsby's involuntary and unwitting movement towards a robust identity theory is the result of a particular diagnosis of the correspondence theorist's ills. I shall now briefly argue for two claims: that Hornsby's diagnosis is incorrect; and that, once the diagnosis is corrected, we will be cured of any urge towards a robust identity theory.

Both Hornsby and McDowell portray the correspondence theorist as a kind of extreme, or transcendental, realist: someone who takes the world (which is supposed to be a world of states of affairs) to be a self-subsistent realm beyond our concepts. Once this picture is seen as objectionable, and once it is thought to be the job of an account of truth to correct it, Hornsby is bound for trouble. For if the objectionable feature of the correspondence theory is its portrayal of facts as beyond the outer boundary of our concepts, then it is tempting to suppose (with McDowell and Hornsby) that these facts should be brought within the realm of sense and identified with (true) thoughts. This results in the incoherence that I have outlined, if we assume (correctly) that thinkables are Fregean.

However, we came to appreciate in Chapter 1 that the distinctive feature of a correspondence theory is not so much a commitment to this metaphysical picture, but to the thesis that every truth must have a truthmaker. Once it is observed that facts are best equipped to be truthmakers, we arrive at the correspondence theorist's singular vision of facts as states of affairs which make thinkables true. This conception of facts as truthmaking states of affairs – the benchmark of a correspondence theory of truth – is quite separable from a commitment to 'the myth of the given'. In fact, an acceptance of 'the myth of the given' is neither necessary nor sufficient for thinking that facts make truths true. It is unnecessary because one could take the facts which occupy the truthmaking role to be things which were in some way conditioned by our concepts. (A Kantian who took phenomena to be arranged in states of affairs, distinct from the vehicles of truth, would be such a philosopher.) It is insufficient because someone could agree with Hornsby's opponent that the world lies beyond the 'outer boundary of the space of concepts' (McDowell 1994, p. 8) and yet take that world to be a world of objects merely, and not states of affairs. (Such would be the view of a philosopher who coupled a denial that facts are truthmakers with an 'Australian Realist' view of mind/world relations.[15])

Rather than a commitment to 'the myth of the given', it is the belief that truths are made true by facts which proves the correspondence theorist's downfall. In Chapter 1 we came to appreciate how uncompulsory it is to think that truths must have truthmakers at all. This being so, ontological economy dictates that we identify facts with true thoughts, which is the thesis I defended in Chapter 4.

It would, however, be unfair to say that the concept of a truthmaker has no mention in Hornsby's discussion. When discussing the views of semantic anti-realists, for example, Hornsby observes insightfully that '[t]heir formulations often appear to invoke a conception of a truth-maker which will suit a correspondence theorist but which an identity theorist cannot allow' (1997, p. 8). But this interest in the notion of a truthmaker is only fleeting and is not given the central place that it warrants. Once it is appreciated that a commitment to truthmaking, and not to a kind of transcendental realism, is the source of the correspondence theorist's woes, the remedy is clear: a modest identity theory must be adopted. Moreover, once the issue of the soundness of transcendental realism is revealed to be a *non sequitur* to the debate as to the correctness of correspondence theories, we are no longer tempted by the kind of (ultimately incoherent) robust identity theory which we have seen tempt Hornsby.

It is true to say that 'the identity theory is worth considering to the extent that correspondence theories are worth avoiding' (ibid., p. 6); but once we know *why* correspondence theories are worth avoiding, we know that the identity theory worth adopting is thoroughly modest. It is an identity theory that takes facts to be true thoughts, not states of affairs, and which is quite compatible with a sensible deflationism about truth.

Notes

1. The qualification is needed because Hornsby insists that her theory is modest rather than robust (1999, pp. 2–3). However, as we shall see in §4 below, if Hornsby's theory is modest, it is difficult to make sense of three claims made by her: that the world is a constellation of facts; that her identity theory forms a stand against deflationism; and that her identity theory corrects the correspondence theorist's (supposed) mistake of thinking there to be an 'ontological gap' between content and the world.
2. For the history of identity theories of truth, see Candlish (1989 and 1995), and Baldwin (1991a).
3. For Russell (1903), such constituents were 'terms': a class of entity straddling the distinction between particulars and universals; for Moore (1899), they were what he called 'concepts'.
4. Moore's use of the word 'concept' to describe the constituents of propositions might suggest that he is following Frege in taking propositions to have modes of presentation as constituents. If this were so, it would follow that his claim that '[t]he world is formed of concepts' (1899, p. 182) would amount to the thesis that the world is made up of modes of presentation. But such an odd, not to say incoherent, view is not Moore's. For Moore, external objects are nexi of concepts (1899, p. 181), so he preserves the idea that propositions have as constituents the items they are about and avoids the conclusion that the world is made up of modes of presentation. For a discussion of two philosophers, John McDowell and Jennifer Hornsby, who appear drawn towards the (incoherent) view that the world is made up of senses, see §4 below.
5. Baldwin, for example, says that it is 'strictly incorrect to attribute to Moore an identity theory of truth' (1991a, p. 42). Candlish agrees, arguing that 'Baldwin's suggestion that Moore defines reality in terms of truth can be regarded as a reason for not attributing to Moore an identity theory of *truth*, but . . . rather regarding truth as, for Moore, indefinable' (1995, p. 117)
6. I took the same line in my 1995.
7. Candlish fails to see this. He correctly locates the difficulty with robust identity theories as being 'an inadvertent identity theory of falsehood' (1995, p. 116), but continues, 'so that one is left with no account of the distinction between truth and falsehood' (ibid., p. 116). But a 'facts-first' robust identity theorist *can* offer an explanation of the difference between truth and falsehood: the former is identity with fact, the latter is identity with a non-actual

arrangement of objects. As we shall see presently, the problem comes at the next stage: when it must be explained how a non-actual arrangement of objects can be unified, and hence how a proposition can *be* false.

8. My reading of Bradley's argument has been greatly influenced by that of James Allard (1980, 1984).
9. This is noted by W.J. Mander (1994, p. 35).
10. Hornsby acknowledges that McDowell himself would hesitate before calling his position an identity theory (1997, note 2). His Wittgensteinian hostility to what he terms 'constructive philosophy' (McDowell 1994, p. 95) would, I think, preclude him from deeming his remarks as *theoretical*. None the less, as we shall see below, Hornsby is correct in viewing McDowell as agreeing with what her kind of identity theorist has to say.
11. Max de Gaynesford (1997, p. 506) denies that McDowell identifies facts with true thinkables, suggesting that McDowell's explicit denial of any ontological gap between thought and the world should be distinguished from a commitment to the identity thesis. However, the quotation I have just cited illustrates that de Gaynesford has misread McDowell. McDowell's view could not be expressed any clearer than it is: '[t]he identity displays facts, things that are the case, as thoughts in that sense – the thinkables that are the case' (McDowell 1994, p. 178).
12. I press the same point against McDowell in my 1995.
13. I introduced this notion in Chapter 1, §2.2.
14. Hornsby is unexpectedly cautious on this issue, saying that her theory '*does* rely (I think) on what Dodd called "the Fregean conception of facts"' (1999, p. 3). None the less, it is the direction she is moving in by virtue of her denial that her theory is a robust one.
15. 'Australian Realists' are philosophers who would be unconvinced by McDowell's critique of 'the myth of the given'. It may be that few Australian Realists are Australians.

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